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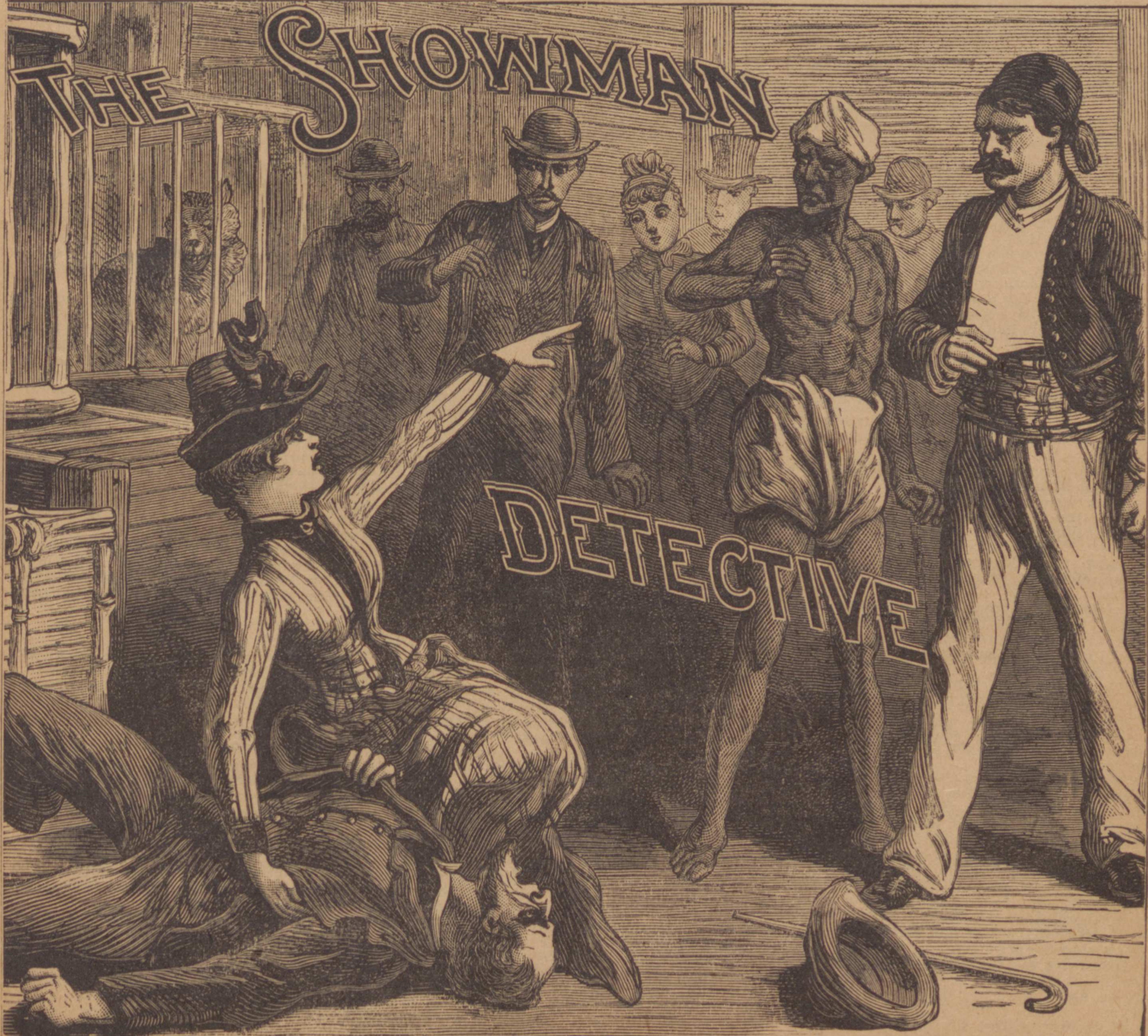
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Vol. LX.

BY JACKSON KNOX,--"Old Hawk."

OLD GRIP'S ROGUE ROUND-UP.

OR,



"TREACHERY—MURDEROUS TREACHERY!" THE LION QUEEN SCREAMED, LOOKING UP AND POINTING AT MARKHEIM.

The Showman Detective: OR, OLD GRIP'S ROGUE ROUND-UP.

BY JACKSON KNOX, (*Old Hawk*,
AUTHOR OF "OLD GRIP, DETECTIVE," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

AMONG THE ANIMALS.

"THOSE two I shall take," announced Mr. Shoresby, of the great Shoresby and Reisbach Menagerie and Hippodrome Combination, and he pointed selectingly into the tigers' cage with his slender walking-stick. "But that sullen, under-sized brute in the further corner there we sha'n't want. Come along, Luella, my love. We must next have your opinion as to the new lions and leopards. And then for the serpents."

These business-like words were chiefly addressed to one Eben Markheim, a swarthy, sinister-featured man of herculean built, in semi-Turkish or Arab costume, animal-tamer and chief foreign collector for Steiche & Co., the noted wild animal importers, while the reference was made to Luella Shoresby, a singularly beautiful and independent young lady at the speaker's side.

The rest of the group was composed of an unobtrusive but keen-eyed man, Mr. Edward Gripon ("Old Grip"), the official detective of the Shoresby and Reisbach Combination; of Mr. Reisbach, his wife, "Madame Irmgard Hohenlohe," an enormous, motherly-appearing woman, still handsome in an elephantine way, show property-woman, and, strange as it may seem, a superb professional equestrienne and miscellaneous performer; "Mlle. Olga Hohenlohe," daughter of the Reisbach couple, and also a professional—a sweet-faced little thing of such fairy-like figure as to seem but the sport of the vagrant air, and yet a wonderfully tough, athletic little aggregation of nerve, muscle, sinew and springiness withal; of Silas Grimwald, the chief menagerie clown, an odd character in his way; of Polly Grimwald, the latter's wife, assistant property-woman; of Master Young America Cheese-it, juvenile equestrian and general performer; the Man Ape, as he was chiefly known to tented fame by reason of his master specialty; of Sorab and Ayettah Drubbeljah, Hindu snake-charmer and Nautch dancer respectively, and several others, more or less associated with the show or the animal-importing firm, whom it is not necessary to particularize.

The scene was on a Hoboken steamship pier, where a large invoice of wild beasts, rare birds and serpents had just been landed, while some of the cages were still in transit from deck to wharf. The time was at the threshold of the summer tenting season of several years ago. The show combination was occupying an immense section of the Elysian Fields Annex, but a short distance back from the pier, where busy preparations were in progress for the first move on the season's tour.

Unlike most similar combinations, the animal department was the ruling feature of the Shoresby and Reisbach enterprise; and, chiefly under old Shoresby's direction, for he was a famous expert, selections for purchase and incorporation with the menagerie stock were now being made from among the new importations.

Markheim scowled slightly and shrugged his mighty shoulders as he led the group on among the other cages, after making a memorandum of the tigers selected.

"The rejected one is the gem of the lot," he growled. "He is young yet—that's why he is so skulky—and will grow to a perfect beauty of a man-eater—and woman-eater, too, for that matter."

And he glanced admiringly at the handsome Luella, as if he would but too willingly be an eater in her case, notwithstanding that she seemed to regard him with mingled repulsion, indifference and fear.

"I'm doing this thing!" interposed old Shoresby, a little sharply. "Are these all the lions you shipped?"

They had come to a pause before an enormous box-cage, containing six full-grown, noble specimens.

"Yes; and they're beauties, every cat of 'em!" asserted Markheim, with some pride, as he prodded the sullen inmates into roaring and snarling animation with a long iron-shod staff he carried. "Somewhat disciplined, too, for I gave 'em three months training myself while waiting at Hamburg and on ship-board."

The young woman, Luella, had listened with apparent indifference, and now, signing slightly to a subordinate attendant, she slipped out of sight between the cage and an adjoining one, followed by the man.

Then there was the clicking of a spring-bolt, the sudden opening and closing of a door somewhere, and she was in the cage among the lions!

Her father knitted his brows, Markheim's sullen eyes kindled strangely, and many of the group began to call out warnings and dissents.

"You are over rash, my dear!" cried Mr.

Shoresby. "You should be sure of the brutes beforehand."

It did seem incongruously terrible to see the beautiful young creature coolly making herself at home there, in a charmingly tasteful and well-fitting spring toilette, among the great shaggy-maned, fierce brutes, which already began to snuff and prowl suspiciously around her.

"That is just what I am making sure of now, papa," coolly replied the girl. "Don't decide, please, till I have formed an opinion. Vincent, a whip, if you please."

She passed her parasol through the bars, receiving in return from the man addressed, the same who had obeyed her sign of a moment before, a slender, steel-stiffened whip, with which she at once began putting the monsters through a series of trick-evolutions, with the coolness of an expert in the animal-taming art.

"Beware of that short-maned brute!" called out Markheim, rather with sullen instinctiveness than natural anxiety. "He is from the Cape, and gave me the most trouble."

A disdained gesture was her sole response, and she at once began devoting herself specially to the lion particularized, after which she expressed her opinion of her terrible companions as unconcernedly as a jockey from the midst of a horse-dealer's stock-yard.

While this interesting performance was going on, Markheim, who had edged up nearer to old Pap Shoresby, as he was more familiarly known in the show business, at once engaged him in a low-voiced conversation.

"I tell you no, no, no!" the veteran at last exclaimed, impatiently, and just guarded enough to confine his words to the person addressed. "Even if my daughter did not detest you, as she certainly does, I should not countenance your suit for an instant. Let that end the distasteful business!"

"It doesn't and sha'n't end it!" growled the other, his eyes smoldering dangerously beneath their scowling brows. "I love the girl, Pap!"

"Who doesn't?" with a prideful shrug.

"I've done well on this last animal-collecting trip, with money in the bank before starting."

"Ah!" indifferently.

"But you will persist in never saying a good word for me?"

"First, last and all the time. Hold on; you might as well have it all, since it was you that forced the matter. Know this, then, Eben Markheim: Were it even otherwise with Luella, and you had even succeeded into mesmerizing her into your favor, as you do the animals and serpents that are under your control, I would sooner see her in her coffin than in your arms as wedded wife; so pray, oblige me by never recurring to the subject again."

"All right; I sha'n't again—to you!" and Markheim strolled apart from the veteran.

The latter now selected three of the lions which Luella indicated as the choicer of the six; and the young lady made her exit from the cage as unconcernedly as she had entered it.

"Look out for Eben!" whispered the man Vincent, as he returned her parasol, receiving back the whip. "He's just had words with your father, and looks dangerous."

Luella smiled as she rejoined the professional group, that was once more on the move.

"This way for the serpent!" called out Markheim, leading the way among some odd-looking crates, hampers and barred boxes. "Gorgo, the pythons and boas first," to an attendant. "Those crates," to the group, "on the left are supposed to contain the harmless snakes; the others, opposite, contain the cobras. Govern yourselves accordingly, please."

CHAPTER II.

A SERPENT'S STING.

THE attendant addressed moved silently among the packages, most of which were provided with glass panels through which their coiled inmates were more or less observable.

This man, Gorgo, was a Javanese of extraordinary aspect.

Naked to the waist, his lithe, spare, muscular form was as yellow and shining as new bronze, while his face resembled that of a corpse—a corpse-face, with the eyes of a snake and the lips of a lizard; while every movement of the man suggested serpent-like deadliness and grace, he was an admirer of Markheim's, whose chief assistant he had been for several years.

"Ha!"

And, in obedience to a fresh sign from Markheim, Gorgo whipped a good-sized python out of a case.

"Pshaw; we've a better python in our stock," commented Shoresby, leaning, for he was slightly lame, with one arm upon a crate; while the others of the party looked on with the business-like air of persons familiar with such *outre* things. "Isn't that so, Sorab?"

Drubblejah and his sister, Ayettah, both grinned an assent, though they had both been Markheim's personal adherents during the latter's whilom connection with the show.

"That settles it," continued old Shoresby, in his peremptory manner. "Show us a rock-snake and a Brazilian, if you have them."

"All right, sir!" and Markheim signed again to the Javanese, who, after returning the sleepy

python to its den, began opening a large case nearer at hand. "But allow me to remind you, pap, that cobras are in that crate on which you are leaning."

Mr. Shoresby somewhat hastily transferred his supporting arm to an adjoining wire-topped crate or wicker-box, one side of which Gorgo had just manipulated, in obedience to a glance from Markheim, with a slight-of-hand movement unnoticed or disregarded by the onlookers.

"Ha!"

And then the Javanese had, wreathing and writhing and looping around him, like another Laocoön, an enormous boa, whose semi-torpor alone rendered his handling by even such experienced hands a matter unattended by imminent danger.

As it was, the Oriental was all but weighed to the ground by the massive folds, which he, nevertheless, regarded with a species of strange fondness, his bead-like, snakish eyes glistening and his fang-like teeth showing through his thin prehensile lips as he fondled the monster's heavy, slightly drooping head.

"How's that for an ox-squeezer?" cried Markheim, triumphantly, while every one pressed a little closer to examine the serpent with true professional curiosity.

"A fairish constrictor!" commented Shoresby, with purchasing indifference. "A true Brazilian, eh?"

"He reached Bremen fresh from the forests of the Orinoco," was the proud reply, "but was too big for 'em to handle over there. He is forty-one feet from nose to tip."

"How much does Steiche want for him?"

And Shoresby shifted his wrist along the top of the bamboo cage upon which he was leaning.

"I think he'll let him go to you for four hundred."

"It's a bargain. Reisbach, have the biggest serpent den in readiness, and then Sorab will—"

The words ended in a shriek; and then, amid general consternation, as the veteran showman staggered back with his bleeding wrist upraised, a small but terribly hooded head, lurid with reptilian rage, darted into flashing view from between the bamboo slats before disappearing with an angry hiss.

"A cobra di capello!" gasped Shoresby. "My God! I'm a dead man!"

And, as his daughter's agonized shriek rung through wharf-sheds, he went down in convulsions.

"Heavens and earth! I thought that hamper empty," stammered Markheim, seemingly appalled. "Gorgo, how did the cobra get into it?"

Gorgo, who was hurriedly unloading himself of the boa, preparatory to returning it to its case, could apparently only grin and chatter in response, with his bronzed face and body sickled to a livid, lurid hue not unlike the fleeting vision of that hooded head.

Luella Shoresby had thrown herself upon her father's writhing form.

"Treachery—murderous treachery!" the Lion Queen screamed, looking up with clinched hands and streaming eyes at Markheim and his subordinate. "Fiends, you conspired for this, you contrived it between you. Oh!" subsiding upon the stricken form; "he will die—there is no antidote—he will die! Speak to me, my father, speak to me!"

Then a brief mercy was hers, and she was borne away by Mrs. Reisbach and Polly Grimwald, in whose arms she had fainted.

But her horrified prediction was none the less verified. The venom of the cobra di capello has no antidote, and old Pap Shoresby, the veteran show proprietor, was a dead man, without having once recovered consciousness, when laid upon his bed in the neighboring hotel, less than twenty minutes after receiving the serpent's sting!

It was on the night following the old showman's funeral that Old Grip, the detective, while making one of his nightly rounds among the animal quarters of the Combination, was attracted by voices in low and earnest conversation.

Slipping into a convenient nook between the hyena cages and the elephant inclosure, he presently saw the speakers approach.

They were Eben Markheim and Gorgo, and, pausing at a deserted bench near the place of his concealment, they continued talking in voices that were now audible.

The dim light from the turned-down gas-jets, that rendered the vastness of the rude interior visible, sufficiently betrayed their sinister faces and their orientally-garbed figures.

"You think, then, sahib," said the Javanese, "that we shall have a clear field, now that we are once more members of the company?"

"Without a doubt. The Drubbeljahs are devoted to me, no less than yourself, my Gorgo. There is literally no one to fear but Old Grip, the detective, who may be circumvented; and, with old Shoresby securely gathered to his fathers, sooner or later Luella must be mine, by fair means or foul, with the undivided half-in-

terest in this splendid show which is hers by inheritance."

"Foul means enough already, one might say," chuckled Gorgo, who spoke English with scarcely a foreign accent. "Idols and sacrifices! but what would you have done without that cleverly-contrived cobra's strike?"

"It was nobly conceived; and, in acting upon my signal as you did, Gorgo, with that wonderful sleight-of-hand of yours—"

Here the Showman Detective—after a noiseless preparation for possible emergencies—suddenly confronted the plotting pair.

"With that wonderful sleight-of-hand of yours," continued Markheim, steadily, and without a break, though his companion had started guiltily, "that saved Miss Shoresby from sharing, with her unfortunate father, the cobra's fatal sting."

Then he looked up to the detective with a careless nod, adding:

"You see, my friend, I always fill out my sentences, even when taken somewhat unaware."

"I am no friend of yours, as you ought to know, Eben Markheim," replied Gripon, sternly; "and the evasion, clever as it is, will avail you nothing."

Markheim smiled, and at an imperceptible sign from him, the corpse-like Javanese melted out of sight amid the surrounding shadows.

"Indeed!" said he, coolly. "And what would I evade, pray?"

"What you would doubtless have uttered but for my interruption."

"So! you are one of these pre-scientists that would read unspoken thoughts?" with an angry sneer.

"With certain subjects, yes."

"And what was I about to utter, Mr. Soul-Reader?"

"A completion of the self-confessed guilt already half-made."

Here there was a rattling stir by some one among the immediately-adjoining cages, whose savage inmates, including lions, tigers, panthers, leopards and hyenas, straightway began to lash and war.

"Self-confessed guilt as to what, pray?"

"The murder of old Pap Shoresby, at your instance, by that human serpent's act!"

"Liar and calumniator! This charge shall cost you dear!"

The words were shouted in almost a thunderous voice, and Markheim's herculean form was crouched as if for a resentful spring.

As Old Grip coolly fell into position to receive it, there was a whistling, hurtling sound from out of the darkness, and his neck was encircled by the concealed Thug's strangling cord!

CHAPTER III.

THE DETECTIVE'S HARD SNAP—A PRINCESS OF THE TENTED RING.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the unseen came the open attack—an overpowering, murderous leap on the part of Markheim.

The next instant Gripon, apparently half-strangled by the throttling cord, was propped up sidewise by Markheim's gigantic clutch against the corner bars of the leopard cage, whose ferocious occupants at once bounded toward the human meal thus unexpectedly proffered to their insatiate jaws.

"Claw him in, *Spots!*" roared Markheim, encouragingly, while Gorgo, the Thug, once more visible, danced with graveyard glee in expectation of the hideous feast. "Chew him up, Ringtail! At him, Redfang!—What's the matter with the infernal brutes?" with a baffled oath. "Stir 'em up again, Gorgo! There's the prod under your feet!"

But the single sidelong glance that the apparently powerless detective had been enabled to throw into the cage—that terrible and *taming* glance, whose mysterious secret was his no less than Markheim's, though unsuspected by the latter until this moment—had been sufficient.

After the first forward bound the leopards had hung back uneasily, notwithstanding the leonine and tigrish roarings near at hand, mingled with the frantic trumpetings of the elephants, swinging and swaying at chain's-length in their shadowy pen, the chorus of the other contiguous brutes and the encouraging shouts and oaths from Markheim and his cadaverous adherent.

Instantly on the heels of this occurred the second surprise for the baffled villains.

With a scarcely perceptible shrug of his shoulders a bowie-knife concealed down behind the detective's collar and whose up-jerked handle had interposed between the straining cord and the back of his neck was shot up and turned edge-outward as high as his ears, severing the triple-twined cord in a trice.

Then, with a lightning-like twist, twirl and wrench combined, he was out of the big tamer's clutch, away from the cage, and Markheim's head, face and body were sounding like drums under the clean-cutting, shoulder-hitting vigor of the Showman Detective's fists, while the Javanese was simultaneously doubled up like a jack-knife by a sidelong kick in the midriff, that puffed a demoniac and agonized screech

out of his snake-like lips even more suggestive of Pandemonium than the hubbub of wild-beast fury which it so shrilly overtopped.

Such was the changed stage of the situation as the various *attachés* of the show, including some others, whose sleeping-quarters were near at hand, in anticipation of the tenting-tour which was to begin the following day, came rushing with torches and lanterns, and in every stage of ludicrous *dishabille*, upon the disturbing scene.

"Help! murder!" squeaked Gorgo, as another flying kick, this time in the small of the back, doubled him up in the opposite direction. "He'll kill us both!"

"The man's a maniac!" grunted out Markheim, still undergoing the drubbing which he seemed wholly incapable of countering or evading. "Take him away, some of you! Can't you see he's mad?"

There was such scientific method in the detective's "madness," however, that the majority of the new-comers roared over the entertainment, while Silas Grimwald, placing his hands on his knees, drawled out with his clown-in-the-ring seriousness:

"I say, Mr. Ringmaster! which of the pair do you intend skinning alive simultaneously?"

At last, however, at a beseeching sign from Miss Shoresby, together with a less regarded one from old Reisbach, the detective suddenly desisted from landing his bump-raising, bruise-evoking blows at will upon Markheim's gigantic form, and with a parting kick at the Javanese which stood that unenviable individual on his head in a tub of water, quietly folded his arms over his scarcely heaving breast.

"I won't have fighting and quarreling in the show!" cried Mr. Reisbach, angrily. "What was all this about?"

Grip coolly indicated the discomfited pair with a careless nod.

"Ask them," he replied, with a stern glance. "I make no complaint—at present."

Markheim muttered some half-intelligible words about its having been a private difficulty that needed not to be discussed, and strode gloomily away, followed slinkingly by the Javanese, as a whipped cur might follow his defeated master.

The crowd then began to disperse, after the detective had addressed some half-apologetic words to Reisbach, whom he knew to be more or less mysteriously under Markheim's thumb.

But as Gripon was slipping off to his quarters Polly Grimwald touched his shoulder.

"Luella would converse with you in private," she whispered.

It was now about ten o'clock at night, and something like quiet had been restored among the savage inmates of the cages, pens and inclosures.

Luella Shoresby was alone in the little parlor of her suite of rooms in the small hotel immediately adjoining the show's winter-quarters when the detective announced himself.

There was already a bond of confidence between them, but this was the first time the detective had met the beautiful young woman alone since her bereavement.

Luella was pale and sad, but thoroughly composed, and she was, moreover, invested with an absorbed, business-like air that was more pronounced than formerly; though even from early in her active, motherless young life she had entered almost as thoroughly into her unfortunate father's counsels and affairs as into his paternal feelings.

"I have sent for you, Mr. Gripon," she gravely observed, after motioning her visitor to a seat with her customary sweet smile, "to request an explanation of this encounter with those—those men."

"I am glad to be at your service, miss," was the modest reply.

"Am I right in supposing that the quarrel was not strictly of a personal nature?"

"Perfectly right, Miss Luella."

"Had you charged them, either directly or indirectly, with contriving my father's death?"

"Yes."

And then he told her what he had overheard, and how the encounter had originated.

The girl's brow grew stern.

"Of course, as you must have surmised," she said, "I have my own opinion as to the criminality of Markheim and Gorgo."

"Certainly."

"And you have doubtless entertained the same suspicion from the first?"

"From the first."

"Which what you overheard to-night must have in a measure confirmed."

"Exactly."

"Why, then, did you not state the cause of the quarrel?"

"I can afford to wait for a certainty; let us see if Eben Markheim can equally afford it."

Luella gave a little shudder, though rather of repulsion than fear.

"I understand. That terrible man! You would be absolutely sure of proving his guilt before striking home?"

"That is it, Miss Shoresby."

"My own policy, too, with the man. But, in the mean time, he may kill you!"

"He scarcely succeeded to-night, even with the Gorgo and leopard combination."

"Ah! you are invincible in ordinary or open warfare—every one knows that of Mr. Gripon!"

"Let me hope in secret and ambushed warfare likewise."

"Oh, but I fear, I fear!"

"I don't."

"Of course not. Fear? The association of such a word with the name of Old Grip, the veteran leader of the detective profession! I should say not!"

"Dear young lady—daughter of my murdered friend, and consequently my *protégée* until death—do not command me beyond my deserts."

"I do not, and you must know it, Edward Gripon!" looking at him with pleased surprise and eagerness. "And yet this man, this Markheim, is so influential, and has already secured his reengagement by Reisbach. Oh!" wildly and desolately—"I am so lonely, so deserted, so isolated now! Self-confidence is not everything. Whither shall I turn for support, sympathy, guidance?"

CHAPTER IV.

A COMPACT.

THE Showman Detective had started forward from his chair—his heart in his eyes, you might say—as if with the intention of throwing himself at the beautiful Luella's feet, in an access of devotion, if not idolatry.

Grief had only strengthened and intensified her rich womanly and yet girlish blonde beauty, as it were. As showwoman proprietress, she was even more attractive and impressive than as "Mlle. Luella, the Equestrian Sprite and Lion-taming Wonder"—"the Princess of the Tented Ring"—as she had been so often "billed" from her early girlhood upward. In the loose yet perfectly-fitting tea-gown, light blue, of soft, clinging material, which she wore to-night, broadly and loosely girdled with a cherry-colored sash, and deeply, creamy laced at the low neck, along the front and at the edges of the flowing sleeves—for Luella Shoresby did not believe in the outward trappings of woe, as a worldly indication of private bereavement, and had dared to abstain from mourning robes—she was even as statuesque proportioned for the appreciative gaze as when careering in the flash of a myriad lights upon the back of her favorite steed, or posing, whip in hand, in the blaze of tinsel and fleshings, in her chosen wild-beast cage, for the admiring but sordid delectation of the give-us-our-money's-worth thousands.

No wonder that the detective, long one of her worshipers in secret, was moved by that desolate appeal for companionship, guidance and sympathy to fall at the feet of the peerless creature then and there.

As it was, however, he restrained his emotion and contented himself with holding out his hand, saying with earnestness and frankness:

"Do not, I beseech you, speak so forlornly, Miss Luella! Am not I your friend, your devoted friend?"

"Yes, yes," she murmured, gratefully. "No need to remind me of that. But, I feel that I am beset—perhaps hopelessly hemmed in by peril!"

"Never, while I am at your beck and call!"

"Dear Mr. Gripon! brave, kind heart! But you may be done to death in my defense."

"Never think it!"

"But they almost succeeded in feeding you to the leopards to night. Your unexpected prowess alone saved you."

"It will not be less effective when expected."

"Oh, I trust not! I feel, I am sure I can trust in you!"

"Of course, you can and shall! See!" he still extended his hand. "Let it be a compact between us."

"A compact for what?" and she, half-smiling, laid her hand in his.

"For absolute trust and confidence on your part; for protection—devotion to the death on mine. Is it a compact?"

"It is—with all my heart!"

He raised her hand to his lips with knightly and respectful solemnity, but, even thus, as he bowed his head, failing to mark the vivid flush which the action called into her fair face, and which might have thrilled him to the core by its possible significance.

But, tell-tale blushes are not always frequent, and this one was gone when he looked up again.

"Now, to the root of our purpose," said Gripon, briskly. "How has Markheim managed to secure a reengagement for Gorgo and himself?"

"Mr. Reisbach's doings, as a matter of course," Luella replied, in a like terse, business-like tone.

"But you are now half-owner by inheritance."

"He was my poor father's partner so long, besides meaning all for the best. I chose to let him have his way, even in this."

"Then Reisbach does not share in our suspi-

cion of the cobra's bite having been contrived on the part of Markheim and Gorgo."

"Sincerely or otherwise, he scouts the bare hint of such a thing. Besides, you must be aware that Markheim possesses some mysterious hold upon him of old—a secret 'pull,' as the slang of the day might term it."

"True; and this still holds?"

"Yes."

"But Markheim's infamous character, as manifested during his prior connection with the show!"

"His capability is allowed to more than counteract that in Julius Reisbach's mind, I suppose."

"And there certainly is no denying the man's capableness."

"By no means."

"And perhaps he brings with him his monstrous performing grizzly, Chimborazo, as an additional inducement?"

"Yes; Chimborazo will be incorporated with the show, as Markheim's professional specialty, before we start on the road to-morrow. His value can scarcely be overestimated."

"I should say not—the on'y tamed or trick-performing pure grizzly on record!"

"Besides, Markheim, apart from his own specialties, will assume general charge in the taming department; and Minotaur, our crack elephant, has, as you know, always been insubordinate when separated from Eben's personal management."

"True; while docile as a lamb at Markheim's glance or beck. Oh, in a pure business point of view, Reisbach cannot be blamed for jumping at the chance of re-engaging the man, even under the suspicious circumstances."

"And at a hundred dollars a week! You are right, Mr. Gripon; I cannot blame my partner, or find fault with his business tact, in this, though Markheim's association with the show will cause me more or less personal uneasiness."

"Don't forget that you will have Old Grip as your watch-dog, Miss Luella."

"Forget my sole saving sensation? I am not likely to."

"Thank you. But has there not been yet other influences in Markheim's favor with Reisbach?"

"One other, and perhaps the strongest of all."

"Ah! Olga Reisbach?"

"Yes."

"She still keeps to her infatuation for Markheim, then?"

"I have reason to think so."

"And yet, her mother, Madame Reisbach—the Amazonian elder Hohenlohe—used to detest the man."

"She does so still. But, *pouf!* what is either parent but a straw in the fairy-like Olga's caprice?"

The detective laughed.

"I understand. And yet, how odd! that child's continued infatuation for the sinister and gigantic Markheim."

"Who, unfortunately, does not deign to reciprocate the sentiment," and Luella sighed. "However, that 'child,' pray remember, is less than a year my own junior."

"Still she is so innocent and sprite-like. However, I have sometimes doubted the fair Olga's good faith."

"No more than I."

Here there was a light, rustling tap on the door, and, without waiting for a response, the fair subject under discussion came floating, smiling, all but kissing her hand, into the room, as if just making her sylph-like *entree* into the blaze of public admiration, scantily clad, and tip-toeing, like a seraph on the wing, on padded saddle or trapeze-bar.

"Ah, dear me! you are engaged with Mr. Gripon, and I have intruded?" she lisped. "But, never mind, dear Luella; I only want to see if my last pair of silk tights are not mislaid among some of your taings, and then I am off again."

Luella made a gesture toward a heap of finery in one corner, and while the fair intruder rustled and fluttered thither, buzzing and murmuring fresh and pretty excuses during her seemingly industrious search, the interrupted pair, for form's sake, kept up a conversation on commonplace topics.

A veritable Frou-Frou of the sawdust was Mlle. Olga Hohenlohe, as she was already widely and favorably known to fame. Pretty as a doll, lithe as a kitten, active as a grasshopper, diminutive as a condensed angel, with apparently nothing but child-like innocence in her flossy yellow curls, her pink-and-white complexion, her baby features and wide-staring china-blue eyes; and all enhanced, at this moment, by her being more than half in professional costume—that of an equestrian fairy, as one might call it, apparently fresh from a trying-on experiment with her stage properties.

"Eureka! found at last!" she exclaimed, selecting a pair of fleshings from the heap that would have seemed a tight fit for a robust miss of seven or eight, and flaunting them aloft. "Oh, Luella! you dear kleptomaniac!" with a purling little laugh of mock badinage; "the

folly of your cabbaging my tights for—for such columns as you possess!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Olga," replied Miss Shoresby, composedly, while the detective failed even to smile. "If your things were mixed with mine, you have doubtless but yourself to blame."

"Of course, Looly. I'm so careless. But I must be off now, or mamma will be after me with a sharp stick. You see, we are all to try on our new duds to-night—she and I, and Polly and Ayettah—"

Here there was a thundering knock at the door, at which the child-like Olga cowered in pretended affright.

Then, with even less ceremony than she had manifested, Mamma Reisbach herself—"Mme. Irmgard Hohenlohe—also in professional *dis-habille*, strode into the room.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE JAWS OF DEATH.

FAMILIAR as he was with the comparative *abandon* of the show green-room, Gripon could with difficulty keep his countenance at the grotesque, albeit angry spectacle presented by the sudden apparition of Reisbach *mère* upon the scene.

"Back to your room with you, you hop-o'-my-thumb, you!" shrieked Mrs. Reisbach, in her rasping, masculine voice. "Where have you been snooping this half-hour back? Swapping sheep's-eyes, doubtless, with that murdering big villain, Eben Markheim, as of old, eh? *Out!*"

And as Olga made her exit, with a careless laugh at her mother's blustering, the latter sunk into the biggest chair obtainable with a wheezing sigh like that of a collapsing balloon.

"You must excuse my impulsiveness, my friends," she groaned. "But, drat that gal!—However, let it pass. My dear Luella, I know you keep a box of snuff handy for me somewhere."

"Here it is, Mammy Reisbach," and Luella brought to light the coveted snuff. "Did not Olga come in here direct from your rooms then, a few minutes ago?"

"Not she! Oh, that sneaking, hulking villain, that Markheim! I'll get even with him some time, if—if I have to sit down on him!"

And she went on in a long tirade against the individual in question, whom she really seemed to detest with the utmost cordiality.

Reisbach *mère* had likewise been in the trying-on phase of her stage properties, and cut a rather remarkable figure in the semi-sylphide, semi-Amazonian costume in which she had put in her unexpected appearance.

She was an uncommonly fat and tall woman, with a flaming Goddess-of-Liberty face, immense arms, the bust of a giantess, and the girth of a beer-vat, and though she was enabled to compress this redundancy within limitations that passed for the heroic statuesque on public occasions, in the comparative *insouciance* of private life it was rather on the unwieldy gigantesque order suggestive of an elephant in dancing-tights.

"Well, it is getting late, and I must think of bed and childhood's dreams, since we are to make an early start to-morrow, my dears," she at last concluded, after apparently exhausting her vituperation of the absent animal-tamer. "Thank you, my love; I will take a night-cap bottle of beer since you are so urgent. How nicely you *did* polish off that sneaking scoundrel and his man Friday, my dear Mr. Gripon! and he big and muscular enough to bite you in two, like a radish without salt! Had they been springing some dirty trick on you?"

"Really, I would rather not talk the matter over again, my dear lady," replied the detective, with his deprecatory smile. "We shall all get our various deserts some time or other, I suppose, without talking 'em up beforehand. And how charming you are looking of late, Madame Reisbach! You must be losing flesh though, I take it."

The colossal Irmgard, who was fond of Old Grip, on his own merits, was all smiles and urbane, now, and, when she took herself off, a few minutes later, it was with a secret determination that his salary should be materially increased, if her personal influence maintained its ponderosity in the business manipulations of Reisbach *père*.

Then Old Grip also rose to go, holding out his hand to Luella.

"I think we shall understand each other hereafter," he said. "Trust on your part, protection and vigilance on mine, with such occasional exchanges of confidences as prudence may dictate. That is the compact!"

"It is, Mr. Gripon;" and again he missed seeing the beautiful woman's tell-tale blush, as he chivalrously bent his lips over the pretty hand that she placed confidingly in his outstretched palm. "Such is our compact, and with Markheim's plotting scoundrelism as our main objective point, whatever phase it may assume."

"Good! We open at Trenton first, to-morrow night, I believe."

"Yes; and thence westward on our new tour-

ing ground, just as it was mapped out by my poor father."

"Good-night, Miss Luella!"

"Good-night! and do take extra precautions as to the common foe, Mr. Gripon—will you?"

"Thank you, my friend, yes!"

The hotel grounds were closely connected with those where the show had made its winter-quarters; and as Old Grip was threading the intervening space, a large, old-fashioned garden and apple-orchard combined, he had just time to slip out of the path that a man and a young woman had chosen for their secret promenade.

He instantly recognized them as Markheim and Olga, notwithstanding the indistinctness of the cloudy night, and was at once on the alert.

"Be assured that I love but you, sweetheart!" Markheim's voice was overheard to say.

"Ah! but then, why should Luella so fear you on *her* account?" Olga pettishly whispered in reply.

"It is her money, not her beauty, that is her attraction, my dear, as you ought to well know by this time. But I really must be going."

"Her beauty, indeed!"

"Of course it is but nothing, as compared with yours, my darling. Hush! no more complaints. A kiss. There! Could I kiss you that way, if I didn't adore you?"

"I should hope not!"

"You left the detective with her, you say?"

"Yes; and apparently deep in confidence. Oh, that poor bruised face of yours! how I hate that man!"

"Leave him to me! Odd if, between Gorgo, myself, Chimborazo and Minotaur, to say nothing of the Drubbeljahs, he should escape the penalty designed for him!"

"Don't leave me out!"

"Of course, you shall help. But, one more kiss now, from those baby lips, and then good-night."

"Stay, Eben! Do you not sometimes fear the man?"

"Never! I have him constantly under watch, and henceforth he shall not take a step but that a trap is prepared for his unsuspecting footfall. Come; you must further know—"

Here the voices passed beyond the concealed detective's hearing.

Old Grip was deliberating as to whether he should follow up the matter or not, when, with a slight stir, two shadowy figures glided away into the darkness, seemingly from his very side!

Selecting the course of one, he darted like a chance arrow in pursuit.

"So it is *you*, eh?" he exclaimed, unceremoniously collaring his fugitive, who turned out to be the Hindu snake-charmer, Sorab Drubbeljah.

"Yes, sahib. Allow me to observe that you are choking me."

"Oh, indeed!" with a vigorous shake that seemed to rattle the fellow's bones. "What were you up to so close at my side in the orchard?"

"Nothing, sahib."

"Of course you'd lie! Was that Gorgo or your sister with you?"

"I was alone, sahib."

Before the detective could continue his cross-examining, there was suddenly a great uproar inside the elephant pen, in the vicinity of which they were standing.

With a stern, "You'll hear from me later as to this, rascal!" Gripon hurled the fellow violently from him, and then hurried into the dimly-lighted inclosures to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

"At him, Chim!" exclaimed a low, deep voice from somewhere out of the dimness. "And don't forget that you're hungry!"

The detective then just had time to spring aside from the onset of a gigantic figure—the figure of Chimborazo, Markheim's trick-grizzly—that came plunging toward him on his hind-legs; while Minotaur, the dangerous elephant, whose roarings had initiated the hubbub, at the same time darted forward the length of his foot-chains.

Gripon, in evading the grizzly's second rush, was the next instant seized by the infuriated elephant around the body, and hurled up aloft.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the same deep, low voice from out of the spectral dimness. "Say your last prayer, my boy! for between the pair of 'em I rather think your goose is cooked!"

CHAPTER VI.

MARKEIM'S PLOT.

BUT it seemed that the Showman Detective had more lives than his plotting and demoniac enemy had any idea of.

At all events, it chanced that the former had once done Minotaur a piece of kindness, and the memorized gratitude of the king of pachyderms is no less proverbial than his resentment.

"Softly, Minotaur, softly!" cried Old Grip, in a rich, cooing voice, even while being whirled aloft by the enraged animal's trunk; "dost forget the running sore on thy flapping off ear that I salved and bandaged?"

The trumpeting scream of the intelligent brute changed into a sort of modified snort, almost as if he really did comprehend what was

said to him; and when his fling of the detective's body was made, instead of its being made downward under the huge trampling feet, as is chiefly the case when elephants are merciless through extreme anger, it was out and away over the prancing bear's head.

Alighting without injury against the wall of the opposite pen, which had fortunately been padded for a former giraffe's accommodation, the detective bounded lightly to his feet.

Then, seizing a huge iron tent-pin, just as a number of keepers and others dashed in with lanterns upon the scene, he brought it down with such cleverness upon the back of Chimborazo's shaggy skull that the monster went down in a heap, momentarily stunned, and just kicking.

"Ask him!" was Old Grip's cool response to the multitude of queries suddenly showered upon him by the wondering crowd of newcomers.

He pointed to Markheim, who was improving the opportunity of resecuring the grizzly with collar and chain.

"Me!" exclaimed Markheim, looking up with well-affected astonishment. "Why, what have I, who am just this instant here, had to do with it?"

"Perhaps you can answer that question better than any one else," was the detective's careless reply. "But, at all events, those pitchfork prods on Minotaur's haunches, by whomsoever made, might well enough have stirred him to frenzy, even without the unexpected introduction of Chimborazo into his presence."

"How is it that the trick-grizzly is here, anyway?" sternly demanded Mr. Reisbach, who was one of the rapidly gathering knot of spectators. "You were not to produce him till starting-time to-morrow, Markheim."

Markheim glibly explained how he had been compelled to change the grizzly's quarters earlier in the evening, and was continuing his protests to the effect that he could not have foreseen the muddling disturbance that had ensued, when he was interrupted, and general attention distracted by fresh disturbing sounds, mingled with frightened cries in a strangely shrill and hissing voice, beyond a neighboring partition wall.

"Them hyenas!" thundered Reisbach, with better force than grammar, and he made quick movement forward. "By Jupiter! if they've bu'sted the bars of that new cage—"

But here a small door in the partition opened, and Master Young America Cheese-it, the Man-Ape specialist, popped his solemn yet grinning physiognomy through the opening.

"I say!" he sung out, with a side-gesture for Old Grip's special benefit; "if you gentlemen would like to see a red-handed Javanese snake-charmer as fish-bait for a brace of black hyenas, just step this way. It's a free blow-out, with no half-price for youngsters."

"Oly 'Evings!" ejaculated Mr. Grimwald, the stock clown, who was no less Cockney than Merry Andrew; "'ow can a bloody 'eyena never 'ave fish-bait hout of a 'eathen?"

And there was a general rush for the opening, Mr. Reisbach leading the way with knitted brows.

An odd spectacle presented itself on the other side of the partition, which was a compartment devoted to the hyena, monkey and serpent cages.

Squirmingly suspended before the bars of the larger of two hyena cages, by a rope cunningly noosed about his arms and the upper part of his body, was Gorgo, the Javanese, with the half-swinish, half-wolfish inmates snapping viciously at this or that portion of his carcass that chanced to bump between the bars in the course of his desperate but unavailing wriggings to free himself.

That the fierce teeth now and then found appetizing bites was also apparent from the howls that the fellow gave utterance to.

Silently swaying to and fro midway in the monster serpent cage directly opposite, were to be seen the head and neck of the chief Brazilian boa of the collection, as if in some sort of kindred sympathy with the Javanese's predicament.

"Ouch! help! murder!" such was the tenor of Gorgo's shrieking plaints. "Devil's imp of a Young America! I'll skin you alive for this outrage. Your detective master, no less than yourself shall feel my vengeance! Ouch! Oh!"

Old Reisbach, in a bad enough humor before, was additionally indignant now.

"What is the meaning of this?" he angrily demanded of Cheese-it, while Markheim quickly mounted a bench to effect his favorite's release.

"Explain this thing, young man!"

"Easy enough, boss!" replied the boy, coldly pointing over his head. "See that little window, just above the partition door, there?"

"Of course, I do."

"Well, boss, it was through that orifice that Gorgo had snaked his person, and was prodding Minotaur with a pitchfork, when I lighted onto his dirty little trick just before the first rumpus that was started. There's the pitchfork, to speak for itself!"

He pointed to one, lying just under where

Gorgo had been suspended, the tines of which were, in support of the charge, perceived to be stained with the elephant's blood.

Reisbach scowled uneasily.

"What," he exclaimed, "could have been the object of thus maddening Minotaur in the middle of the night?"

Cheese-it shrugged his shoulders and began scratching himself in a comically apish fashion.

"Ask me something easy, boss. Perhaps for the same reason that Gorgo's master, Mr. Markheim yonder, slipped the trick-grizzly into Minotaur's quarters. To make the rumpus that should call my old master, Mr. Gripon, to the spot, maybe, in order to have him unceremoniously chewed up before help could come. Perhaps for no motive at all. You pays your money, and you takes your choice."

"As for the manner of my blocking Mr. Gorgo's game, while at the same time affording the hyenas some little amusement, I think that opportune block-and-tackling dangling from the cross-beam just to one side the little window yonder, ought to also speak for itself, no less eloquently than the pitchfork. My lord juke, thus far the deponent sayeth, and no further."

This crisp and pointed little statement had been rather jerkily made and numerous protesting interruptions on the part of both Gorgo and Markheim, but was none the less effective when completed at last.

"Gorgo, it appears that you, at least, are an infernal scoundrel!" exclaimed Mr. Reisbach; "white," in a modified tone, "Mr. Markheim's conduct is also susceptible of criticism here. Mr. Gripon," to the detective, "do you wish to formulate a distinct charge of conspiracy to injure or perhaps murder you, on the part of either or both these men?"

"Let 'em 'ave it 'ot an' 'eavy, Hold Grip!" cried Grimwald, while others expressed their cordial approval of the sentiment. "They'll plot you sooner or later clean hout of hexistence, hiff you don't."

The detective simply shook his head, and smiled.

"Have you ever known me, Mr. Reisbach, to make personal complaint against any member of this show?" he quietly asked.

"Never, sir!"

"Well, sir, I make none now. When I shall prove otherwise than abundantly able to take care of myself against plots and plotters, you will either receive my resignation or obtain an invitation to attend my funeral," and the detective, slipping his hand under the faithful little Cheese-it's arm, made his retiring bow, while the remainder of the group slowly went to pieces.

A few minutes later, however, when Markheim, attended by Gorgo and Sorab, was crossing the intervening ground in the direction of the hotel, a hand, as of steel in a velvet glove, was suddenly stretched out of the gloom and laid upon his shoulder.

"A few words in private with you, sir!" said a commanding voice.

CHAPTER VII.

FACE TO FACE.

MARKHEIM turned to find himself confronted by Old Grip.

The latter was still accompanied by the boy, Cheese-it.

"Let your friends—your dear, respectable friends—remain, if you choose," continued the detective impressively.

"What do you want?" snarled Markheim, feeling unaccountably uneasy. "I am not in the humor to converse with you at present."

"But it is *my* humor. Stop!"

And, as the giant turned away, the steel grip on his shoulder closed with a vise-like clutch that wrung an involuntary exclamation of pain from his lips.

"Sdeath, man! but you're not named Old Grip without cause," growled Markheim, with a pretense of yielding to the other's desires at last, though not without a sidelong glance at his confederates. "Have your way, then. What do you want?"

"Replies to certain questions I would ask—truthful or otherwise, as you will—I shall be judge as to that."

"Good enough. Let drive!"

"How long do you purpose keeping this thing up before getting yourself hanged, besides being so uniformly foiled?"

"What thing?"

"The attempts on my life."

"I haven't begun any yet."

"You know you lie; but we shall proceed to the next question."

"Make it a little less crazy than the first, if you can."

"Are there not certain benefits you might expect to obtain by my death?"

"Yes; if you insist on it; though I'm no assassin in thought or deed."

"A truthful admission, garnished by an unnecessary lie! Would you be benefited otherwise than in my removal as Miss Luella Shoresby's protector?"

"Yes!" with a species of brazen laugh.

"How so?"

"Well, old Shoresby left a will, if it could be found."

"A mistake; he died intestate."

"I can swear he made one—with genuine earnestness—when I was on good terms with him five years ago. I saw it made and attested."

"Doubtless long since destroyed, then, for you were certainly not on good terms for a year or more prior to his death."

"True; but I feel confident that that will was not destroyed."

"Well?"

"Well, with you out of my path I could have a better chance to look it up than now."

"And suppose the alleged will were produced and proved, what then?"

"Everything."

"What do you mean?"

"Half of everything he should die possessed of was devised to me, Eben Markheim."

"Preposterous!"

"I tell you it's the solid truth, Gripon," with renewed earnestness. "I had saved his life at risk of my own in that Western steamboat disaster that you must have heard of, and he was a grateful old man, was old Pap Shoresby—till you happened to wipe out the score by crossing him afterward."

"In other words, until you thereafter made him your bitter enemy by your own iniquity."

"Have it that way, if you choose."

"And you are so credulous as to suppose that he was the man to fail to destroy such a will when coming to detest you?"

"Yes," slowly. "Few men would have failed to destroy such a will, but Pap Shoresby was just one of those few."

"On what do you base such a strange assumption?"

"On the habits of the man. While he was a person who seldom signed his name to a document, yet one of his puzzling eccentricities was to hoard and treasure such signatures with miserly cunning, even long after they possessed any value or significance."

Old Grip knew this for the truth, and, moreover, it was not the first time he had heard of the steamboat episode.

"You see," continued Markheim, "Pap Shoresby was bound to have laid away that will in some odd cranny or other."

"Possibly, though I believe his effects have been pretty thoroughly overhauled."

"Not as they might be by me."

"Perhaps not. But I am still at a loss to understand how my being out of the way could possibly assist you in a search for which you could still have no excuse whatever, as against Miss Luella's opposition to the same."

"It doesn't matter, since you're not out of the way—not by a blamed sight!"

"To proceed. Could my removal benefit you in what you must consider your hopeless suit for the heart and hand of the young lady herself?"

"Yes," sullenly. "That is, supposing that I do consider it hopeless already, which I don't."

"Why, you must be mad!"

"I don't think I am."

"The girl abhors you!"

"Does she?"

"Yes."

"She might get over that, with you out of the way."

"But how?"

"I sha'n't tell you, if you haven't guessed it already, which isn't very likely."

"It is not only likely, but positively true."

A sudden exasperation seemed to possess Markheim.

"As if you were altogether innocent of her being dead stuck on yourself!" he exclaimed.

Old Grip started, but he promptly replied for all that:

"This is almost, if not quite, as preposterous a suggestion as the encouragement of hope in your own case!"

"Eh? Why not quite as much?"

"Well, I am simply obscure and undeserving instead of being absolutely and notoriously infamous, as you are."

"I ain't infamous! It's my luck, not my character, what's to blame."

"Don't deceive yourself, as you may perhaps successfully deceive—one other at least."

"What other?"

"Miss Reisbach."

Markheim started in his turn. The detective was doubtless better informed than he had given him credit for.

"What good's all this palaver and hair-splitting?" he growled, impatiently. "I don't see what you are driving at."

"Chiefly this, then. I would persuade you, if possible, to give over these dastard attempts upon my life. Otherwise, I shall infallibly hang you, sooner or later, to say nothing of what may be in reserve for these cowardly, spying followers of yours"—with a contemptuous gesture toward Gorgo and Sorab, or where they had been left standing, a little apart, in the gloom.

"I repeat, Gripon, that I haven't any design upon your life—much as I honestly might have, in my own protection."

"'Honesty' is good!"

"It is in this one case. Haven't you openly accused me of having contrived or winked at Shoresby's death?"

"Undoubtedly, but not I alone. It is the secret impression of the entire show-company."

"But will never be proven against me!"

"That is yet to be seen. By the way," peering forward suspiciously, as did Cheese-it likewise, "you had two companions, and now there is but one."

"Are you sure of that?" and Markheim also looked around in seeming surprise.

"Yes." The detective here made sure of the remaining follower by unceremoniously grabbing him for nearer inspection. "So it is Sorab. Where then is Gorgo?"

"It is doubtless I, not Gorgo, that was momentarily missing for your mystification, sahib," was answered, and then a third figure loomed out of the obscurity just behind Markheim.

"Not so, Ayettah!" exclaimed the detective, sternly. "It was certainly Gorgo, not yourself, at Sorab's side originally."

"Oh, no, sahib."

"Silence! You, Markheim, explain this business! More and newer plotting already?"

Markheim shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, you weary me!" he said, in a bored tone. "What plottings are you talking about, Grippon?"

"Markheim, beware!"

"What! you really scent fresh danger for yourself?"

"I do."

"And you would doubtless know more of it from me?" with a laugh.

"Yes, I would and shall!"

"Find out, then!"

Markheim and his two associates (Sorab having been momentarily released by the detective) sprung back.

As they did so the earth seemed suddenly to open under the feet of Old Grip and Cheese-it.

At all events, they were suddenly and incontinently swallowed out of sight.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EARTH-TRAP.

DOWN in unrelieved darkness plunged the entrapped pair, bringing up at last with a great splash in some invisible water, or otherwise they might surely have been killed.

"Where have you gone to?" shouted a mocking and strangely muffled voice from somewhere far overhead. "What! do you think I plotted this trick, too?"

Then silence, and the blackness of unrelieved darkness again.

"How is it with you, my boy?" Grip presently called out.

"Right side up and kicking, boss!" was the cheerful response. "Have got hold of a spile-end, or something of the sort, and am supporting myself on it. How is it with yourself?"

"Equally damp and encouraging, I should say; only my support is some sort of floating and slippery object that is far from sweet-smelling."

"Hold on a minute!"

"Oh, for a number of minutes, for that matter. What species of water-hole do you imagine we have dropped into?"

"Will answer better with some light on the subject."

Then there was the sputter of a striking match, and Cheese-it was perceived squatted upon a just submerged spile-head, with a metallic box of wax tapers, one of which he had succeeded in lighting.

Its feeble light dimly showed them to be in a deep, well-like hole, thirty or forty feet in diameter, the water-bottom of which seemed to be very deep, and perhaps subject to the tidal action of the adjoining river-front.

"Lucky I had these water-proof tapers about me!" commented Cheese-it, striking one after another, and finally several at once, which produced a correspondingly increased illumination.

Then, after a last comprehensive look over his general environments, he glanced at the detective with a quizzical expression, and burst into a loud laugh.

"Easy guessing as to our whereabouts now, eh, boss?"

"I am still puzzled, for my part."

"Still?"

"Yes."

"Have you forgotten the water-front grotto, or weir, that poor Pop Shoresby had constructed for freshening up our seals and sea-lions during the winter?"

"Now I recollect it."

"Well, boss, what is that humpy, shiny, bladdery thing you are making a life-preserver of at this blessed moment?"

And Cheese-it burst out laughing again.

"The deuce! a dead sea-lion!" exclaimed Old Grip, hastily deserting his improvised float for the more agreeable support of a neighboring spile. "Why didn't I suspect it before? We're in some sort of underground connection with the river."

"Exactly; and yonder's the channel," pointing to a low archway under which the water seemed to ebb and flow pulsatingly, "which is to lead us to freedom and the water-front, if

anything will, when we feel equal to the attempt."

"Good! But how the deuce could Markheim, devil though he is, have known of this connection, and precipitated us into it?"

"As to the first part of your question, boss, let me ask you if there is likely any mysterious cranny, underground or otherwise, in the vicinity of our show's winter-quarters, that either Sorab or Ayettah Drubbeljah may have left unexplored?"

"Perhaps not; sort of human eels, both of those treacherous Hindus!"

"Well, there is a leader to the solution of your first conundrum, as to Markheim's information with regard to this pit, whose top was doubtless but inaccurately covered over by the orchard earth-padding which let us through so unceremoniously."

"Well?"

"And perhaps you didn't notice that, while you were talking to him, he kept edging off step by step to one side, and as if merely through restlessness and abstraction."

"No; I did not remark that."

"No more did he intend you to."

"Well, granting that he did worm us along unconsciously over the pit-mouth covering?"

"Now you've got it; for wasn't Gorgo's evanishment suddenly remarked by you, and only to find that his place at Sorab's side had been surreptitiously taken by the Nautch woman?"

"Ah, I see it all! Gorgo would have had ample time to slip into some familiar cavern, connecting well, or other, and knock away the rotten pit-covering supports from under our feet at the merest sign from Markheim!"

"Precisely!"

"The scoundrels! They may accomplish my destruction at last. Who knows? Their diabolism seems no less versatile than inexhaustible!"

"Never say die, boss. However, no need for me to say that to a man like Old Grip, the Showman Detective; though I would like to venture upon one sapient and pointed observation, boss."

"Speak out, my little man. You're no less philosopher than friend in need."

"I'm on my last taper. It's already half-burnt out, as you perceive."

"Good! Then follow me."

And without another word, the detective sprung from his support, and struck out for the arched opening.

The brave lad was close behind, and, fortunately, they were both magnificent swimmers.

However, though the water continued very deep, the air was much better in the passage than in the pit or shaft.

Before many strokes had been taken, they could see a distant glimmer, suggestive of the glistening of gaslights upon an open expanse of water; and then, a few minutes later, the snortings and bellowings of the seals and sea-lions sporting in the weir came as a welcome sound to their ears.

When they dragged themselves out on the river-front, adjoining the show-grounds, at last, much to the seeming astonishment of the noisy but harmless inmates of the weir, everything was quiet in their immediate vicinity, though there were indications of some sort of excitement further back in the direction of the orchard and the hotel.

"Let us not show ourselves, if possible, until we have changed our clothes," suggested the detective. "It may afford us an insight or two. Come!"

This suggestion was successfully acted upon.

As a consequence, there was a counter sensation in store for the crowd of show people who had already been aroused to a great state of excitement by Markheim's prompt report as to the disaster that had suddenly overtaken the detective and Cheese-it in the orchard, which, as a matter of course, he ascribed to an extraordinary accident.

Conspicuous among those who were rushing between the hotel and the broken pit-cover in the orchard, which had naturally become the center of the excitement, immediately following upon Markheim's report, was Luella Shoresby, who made scarcely an effort to control her agitation.

She was pallid and great eyed with horror and rage, though scarcely more so, in outward expression, at least, than good Mrs. Reisbach and honest Polly Grimwald, with whom both Old Grip and Cheese-it had been prime favorites, as indeed they were with the large majority of their associates.

"Don't talk to me about unforeseen accidents, Eben Markheim!" exclaimed Luella, wildly, and substantially for the dozenth time since the alarm had become general. "Your pastanimosity for Edward Grippon, the bravest, truest man on earth, won't bear you out. I tell you, if he is dead at the bottom of that hideous pit, you—mark me, sir—you shall pay for it, if I beggar myself in landing the hangman's noose about your murderous neck!"

"And 'ee'll deserve it, too, as the 'igh 'eavings is my judge!" was the *sotto voce* comment of Mrs. Grimwald, who was as pronounced in her good-heartedness and Cockneyism as her Pun-chinello husband himself. "Oh, but this is

'orrid, 'orrid, 'orrid beyond hall howdacity! And that sweet, handsome little boy, too! 'Ee was heven purtier has a man-hape than most lads in their holiday best!"

"There's a Nemesis in this world, Mr. Markheim!" exclaimed the mighty and majestic Irmgard, in her huskiest of melodramatic tones. "Don't blink that awful truth, if you're guilty again of treachery in this matter."

"Oh, what's the use of talking to you women!" cried Markheim, half desperately. "Both the Drubbeljahs were likewise witnesses of the accident, and you've heard them corroborate my statement with regard to it."

"Lovely witnesses, the Drubbeljahs!" sneered Polly. "Why not ring in Gorgo as an additional eye-witness. He'd swear to anything."

"But neither man nor boy has met his death as yet, for that matter, as far as we know," persisted Markheim. "Even now they're lowering lanterns into the pit, and a man is also going down."

Here a report came from the pit-mouth that search had been made to its bottom, without discovering any signs of the victims.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE ROAD.

"THEY are dead, then—dead at the bottom of the black water!" screamed Polly Grimwald.

Luella stood with clasped hands, wide eyes and the pallor of despair, that might also but too well be interpreted as a heart-anguish over love bereaved.

"Dead! dead!" she echoed; "the best, the truest, the bravest of the brave! And you, plotting, envious villain!" pointing her hand menacingly at Markheim, "must have wrought out his ruin."

"If Old Grip is dead, his death ain't at my door, I tell you!" cried Markheim, looking around him rather uneasily, for the swiftly increasing group of show people bore a generally threatening look. "I'll swear to it! Speak up, there, Sorab—you and Ayettah! you saw the accident by which both man and boy were suddenly swallowed up before our eyes."

"It is true!" corroborated the Hindu, coming forward. "The sahib was no more to blame than my sister or I. Zip! the ground opened, and they were gone!"

"That was the way of it," said Ayettah, nodding her head. "I had just come up to where the sahib was talking to Old Grip and Gorgo had just stepped away. It all happened like a piece of conjuring."

"I came running back at Mr. Markheim's horrified exclamation," put in Gorgo, making his snakelike appearance from the outskirts of the group. "I couldn't understand. There was only the great hole in the ground at the spot where Grippon and the imp of a boy had been standing. Even then I knew not what to think. I had hated them both—the man-ape especially—but I was only appalled, horrified! My heart bled for their misfortune."

"Your 'eart!" exclaimed Polly Grimwald, contemptuously. "Oh!"

"But serpents do 'ave 'earts—after a fashion—Polly!" cried her husband, with mock protestation. "Ow could they 'ave their howdacity and henterprise without 'aving 'earts? Don't be so outrageously henvious, Polly, dear!"

"I'll never believe all this," said Luella, mastering her agitation by a great effort. "Mr. Reisbach, you are responsible for this man Markheim's renewed connection with the show!"

"Of course I am, Miss Shoresby!" replied the half-proprietor, uncomfortably. "But what of it? He should be considered innocent in this tragedy till proved guilty, in common justice. Do be reasonable, Luella!"

"Innocent, indeed!" with scathing bitterness. "Do you forget so soon the circumstances of my poor father's death, then, Julius Reisbach? Do you forget this very night's previous complications in which that man was mixed up so suspiciously with Old Grip?"

"Ang the hanimal, and Gorgo along with him!" roared Grimwald. "Murder's hat the bottom of this! Ang 'em!"

It was the first voicing of a generally vengeful sentiment on the part of the crowd, and instantly there was an incipient rush toward the suspected men, both of whom had turned deadly pale, though Markheim's face wore also the dangerous expression of a beast at bay, for the want of physical courage was not one of his failings.

"Hold!" shouted Reisbach, sternly interposing. "This has got to stop right here! There'll be no Lynch-law on these grounds."

"Mr. Reisbach is right!" cried Luella, resolutely taking her place at his side. "They shall be arrested and the matter investigated; but that is all at present."

"Hang 'em first and investigate later on!" roared Vincent Collier, chief of the wagon-department, and he waved a coil of tent rope over his head amid the cheers of the little mob. "Old Grip and his little friend, Cheese-it, have been foully dealt with, that is certain, and we all loved 'em. The rope first—investigation afterward!"

"Silence, and hear me!" exclaimed Luella, towering between them and their intended victims in all the majesty of her statuesque and commanding beauty. "What senseless cry is this that you would urge? Think you that I am less appalled than you at the deep damnation of this taking off? Listen, my friends! Let it but first be proved that Old Grip and his boy friend are dead, and at the plotting contrivance of these hounds!"

"Yes; but prove that first," interrupted a calm, clear voice. "It is only the fair thing, of course."

And then a great, astonished shout arose and Luella started back, glaring wildly, her color coming and going in roseate waves as Old Grip, followed by Cheese-it, coolly shouldered his way into the center of the crowd.

Polly Grimwald, the tears streaming down her matronly yet comely cheeks, caught the boy to her breast and fairly hugged him. Her husband threw up his hat and set up a Merry Andrew jig on the spot; and the detective had only a chance for one grateful, worshiping glance in Luella's direction before being pounced upon and all but overwhelmed by the rude congratulations of the now transported mob.

"Ducked, but not yet drowned!" assured Old Grip, laughing, in answer to the questions tumultuously piled upon him. "Foul play? Oh, we don't charge that; we're liberal, and inclined to give folks the benefit of a doubt, you must understand. And we're not even wet, eh? Well, do you really think we'd show ourselves in this distinguished company without exchanging wet clothes for dry? Not much! But Cheese-it will have more time than I for the details of our escape."

He made his escape from the good-natured crowd with some difficulty, gave a parting hand-clasp to the Reisbachs and the Grimwalds, and then, in obedience to a sign received from Luella, who had quickly retreated to the hotel, slipped away, leaving Cheese-it to finish the reception, as the affair might now be called.

Miss Shoresby was awaiting him in the dim corridor at the door of her apartments.

"Only one thing now—it is an unseemly hour for more than a dozen words," she exclaimed, hurriedly, though not withdrawing the hand he had impulsively seized.

"One thing it is then, Miss—Luella; and what is that?"

She blushed, but was resolute.

"Just this: Was this, in your opinion, another murderous attempt on the part of Markheim?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And you will not yet force the accusation home upon him?"

"Not yet."

"Good-night, then; and God bless and guard you, sir!"

"Wait!" She had her hand upon the door-knob, but he detained her. "Wait!"

"Well, sir?"

"Miss Shoresby—Luella! is there no other last word to-night but this? Your agitation at my supposed death—your exceptional agitation as I might say! Is it strange that I thrilled to discover some of it unawares? That I, who have adored you so long in secret—"

She interrupted him by an imploring gesture; her eyes were downcast, her face a rose-garden of fleeting blushes.

There was a breathless pause, and then she was in his arms, his kisses raining over cheek, chin, brow, mouth, hands—anywhere, everywhere.

For a single instant did she surrender herself to that delirious embrace. Then—

"Oh, we cannot, we must not love!" she faltered. "Edward, leave me—leave me this instant! Now, at least, there is an impassable gulf between us! This is madness!"

Then he was alone, outside the locked door, mystified, bewildered, not knowing whether to feel happy or miserable.

There were no more adventures for that eventful night.

Disturbed and broken as had been the preceding hours of darkness—fairly packed with exciting incident and adventure, as we might say—by dawn of the following day the great Shoresby and Reisbach Menagerie and Hippodrome Combination had broken up its winter-quarters to the last wagon-wheel and tent-pin, and was on the road.

The opening at Trenton on the following night was under unusually flattering auspices, and with a series of brilliant features in keeping with the promises of the monstrous show-bills, and worthy of the enthusiastic public reception accorded him.

The exhibition was well under way, and Master Young America Cheese-it, in his unique specialty of the Man-Ape of the Amazons, was careering around the ring on his favorite piebald trick pony, amid the plaudits of the delighted spectators.

Suddenly the detective, who was assisting Grimwald and others with the balloons for the fictitious monkey to jump through in the course of his mad career, was the recipient, first, of a chattering nod, and then of a paper pellet, from the little horseman.

The pellet proved to be a scrap of writing, to the following effect:

"A plot hatching. Don't let Miss Shoresby go in with tigers, unless you are on hand."

CHAPTER X.

MARKEIM'S FRESH PLOT.

GRIPPON, having mastered this strange message of Cheese-it's with one hand and a sidelong glance, looked around him with ill-concealed uneasiness.

He couldn't quit his elevated position at the side of the ring; it was in the very midst of the Man-Ape act; and instantly at its close the swift withdrawal of a curtain from a certain conspicuous corner of the connecting menagerie tent would reveal Luella, in her famous impersonation of the Jungle Queen, in the very act of stepping down among the tigers from amidst a mass of cunning scenery designed to enhance the dramatic illusion of this, one of her chief specialties.

What was the danger threatening? How much of a peril might it prove? How had Cheese-it obtained the fragmentary information thus unsatisfactorily transmitted? What was he to do?

Scant time for reflection or decision, for here was the cue.

Up went the papered hoop in the detective's grasp, through it somersetted the Man-Ape, like a veritable flying squirrel, and then the banners would be in order.

But no.

"Watch Grimwald!" came from the hairy little equestrian's lips, almost simultaneously with the explosive snap of his bursting through the papered hoop.

The detective had just time to notice a second pellet pop into the clown's gaping mouth as the next balloon was perforated by the next somerset.

He made a sign, which fortunately Grimwald understood, and then, as they faced each other with the banners from opposite sides of the course a moment later, the clown grinned, wriggled, cracked his chestnut of a joke, and tossed him the pellet he had caught so cleverly.

This, upon being unrolled and deciphered, proved slightly more satisfactory:

"Markheim will introduce his worst tiger at critical moment; then Olga and Ayettah will arrange accident with trapeze directly before cage so as to distract Luella and rouse tigers to frenzy; Markheim's object being to rescue Luella at peril of his own life, and thus put her under obligation, while enhancing his own reputation."

How had Cheese-it managed to scribble such a detailed warning in the bustle and confusion of his employment?

But there was only time for lightning like and decisive action now.

As the Man-Ape finished his equestrian performance with the banners, there was a roar of applause; and then he was seen shinning his way up a guy-rope, according to programme, toward a dizzy trapeze upon which the fairy-like Olga and the darkly-beautiful Nautch girl, Ayettah, had been disclosed perched like human butterflies by the sudden withdrawal of a mist-like curtain away up in the apex of the tent.

Another roar of applause, and then public attention was divided between the triple aerial performance, and the lofty red curtain, adjacent to it, and already trembling on the rise, whose evanishment was to disclose the longed-for jungle scene.

The detective—*en costume* while on ring duty as a graceful falconer, in slashed doublet, gay-plumed hat, striped hose and russet boots—was already bounding thitherward, accompanied by Grimwald, to whom he had tipped a whispered intimation of the danger on foot.

Of course the spectators only applauded the louder, especially at the grotesque antics of the clown in crossing the sawdust; but with never a suspicion of the profound anxiety that was gnawing at the two men's hearts.

Reisbach himself, who was ring-master, would also have been taken into Old Grip's confidence, but there had not been opportunity for this, and he was already making his disappearance into the horse-tent, to hurry up the preparations for the next equestrian feature, in which his wife was to make her *debut* in a new specialty on which great hopes had been builded.

"Quick!" called out the detective in a hoarse whisper, which was partly drowned by the melodious breathings from the music-tand near by. "Carry her the warning before the curtain rises, if possible!"

"You bet!" was the clown's hoarse reply.

Then the detective came to a sudden pause, and Grimwald, trumpeting a loud snort that set the juveniles to yelling with ecstasy, also brought up, with a back hand-spring that drove the coxcomb down over his whitened forehead, for they were too late—the red curtain was already gone.

At a sign from Old Grip, however, they both darted in among the scenes, as inconspicuously as might be, for it would never do to interrupt the act, whatever might chance.

First there was a general hush, which was followed by a deep and vibrating though not tumultuous sort of roar of admiration.

The Jungle Queen was revealed cautiously groping her way down the rocky passage toward the seeming grotto in which the tigers were grouped, apparently in absolute freedom, so cunningly were the iron bars of their cage concealed by scenic art.

The trapeze performers were no longer thought of.

Olga's sylph-like beauty, Ayettah's barbaric charm, the boy-monkey's airy antics—all were alike forgotten in the superb vision afforded by Luella in the scene disclosed.

She was costumed as Diana. One hand resolutely grasped the silver bow, the other statuinely supported her against a rock, and peeping up out of the spotted leopard-skin, rolling back from her ivory shoulders was the silver quiver with its tufted darts.

The gold-cinctured, silver-starred tunic, reaching to the knees, rather expressed than concealed a form whose noble, robust beauty was as the embodiment of a Greek sculptor's dream. The diamond star in the center of her maiden diadem blazed with a steady luster, but was fairly outshone by the classic perfection of the blonde features which it surmounted; and back and down over her ravishing shoulders streamed the crisp splendor of her unbound golden locks like a rich torrent of spun metal.

She had paused, midway down the path, as if fearing and yet half-courting the peril which her huntress instinct whispered was close at hand.

The admiration of the spectators throbbed up from breathlessness into a melodious roar like that of a joyous sea, beating upon the bosom of some fair island that is its enamored love.

The detective himself was spellbound for the moment. He had not been able to see Luella since their strange parting on the previous night; and now, notwithstanding that he was no stranger to this impersonation of hers, the sublimity of her beauty all but his heart to stand still.

Perhaps there was also the consciousness of what was threatening her at this moment, and he unable to warn her that she might be prepared to meet it, that contributed to this sense of fascination upon the detective's part.

However, he could only crouch in the niche that shut him out from both the spectators and Luella herself, and gaze upon her, while holding himself in readiness for what might be preparing for her unconsciousness.

He had not long to wait.

The fair huntress drew aside the last branch of vailing foliage, peered down into the den, and then, bended bow in hand and arrow to string, suddenly leaped down among the striped monsters, with her sharp, masterful cry.

After the first started bound, they came fawning about her feet, according to their training.

Then there was a sudden check in the roaring applause, mingled with horrified cries.

An exclamation of genuine terror had escaped the Jungle Queen's lips, and there was rushing, open-mouthed, upon her from the obscurity of the cavern, an appalling apparition.

CHAPTER XI.

SOMETHING NOT DOWN IN THE BILLS.

THE apparition, so startling to both spectators and performers, was that of a fresh tiger, introduced into the den from behind without warning, and whose savage, untamed ferocity was such as to be evident to even the most anticipative of dramatic illusion on the part of the on-lookers.

Fortunately, Luella retained her presence of mind, and this was well.

For one instant the savage monster paused in his onward rush before the fearless menace of her repressive gaze, while the tamer denizens of the den continued to fawn submissively around her.

Indeed, these latter seemed even more than dumbly content with her presence among them, and one, on whose submissive neck she now had firmly planted her sandaled foot, while waving back the savage intruder with a commanding gesture, literally purred its satisfaction, and looked up to her with a sort of terrible affection in its flaming yellow eyes.

A tableau of splendid dramatic effect, truly!

The spectators breathed again, and even began to applaud once more.

Doubtless a prepared surprise for them, though not down in the bills, was the common impression.

To Reisbach, however—who had returned from the horse-tent, and taken in everything at a glance—and others inside the scene, the affair was of course more awfully significant of real danger to the fair performer; though they hoped almost against hope that the situation might pass off harmlessly, and as an additional hearsay advertisement of the show.

They had forgotten the trapeze!

Suddenly the aerial bar, with the three performers clinging to it, came down with a rush—the guy-ropes that had held it in its lofty position having become mysteriously slackened—to within a few feet before the tigers' den, both Olga and Ayettah giving utterance to startled screams, in spite of their companion Man-Ape's efforts to calm them.

Instantly the tigers were in an uproar, even the best-disciplined among them being roused to frenzy through unexpected fright.

The horror of the spectators was renewed and intensified.

There was a terrible vision of Luella still dauntlessly erect in the den, but with one monster reared on his hind-quarters in readiness to strike her down, and the others roaring, snapping and snarling in close proximity.

It was evident that she was on the point of being torn to pieces and devoured.

"Silence, all!" shouted a deep voice. "I alone can save her, and save her I shall!"

And then Markheim, resplendently herculean in his lion-taming costume, was seen darting across the sawdust, whip in hand, toward the scene of peril.

Luella should be torn, by his prowess alone, from the hungering jaws, the appalling death, and before the eyes of those awe-stricken thousands! Not only should she owe it all and solely to him, the heretofore despised Markheim, but the show should obtain such an advertisement through his heroism as should cause its fame to resound throughout the land.

Such was only too obviously the villain's calculating purpose, in accordance with Cheese-it's warning.

But it was not destined to be achieved as he had planned.

There was one opposing factor that he had, strangely enough, left out of his elaborate calculations—Old Grip.

The latter now unexpectedly rose between him and the threatening tragedy, like an avenging ghost.

"Infamous scoundrel!" thundered the detective, suddenly grasping the lion-tamer by the throat, and shaking him like a reed, in spite of the disparity in their size and build; "you would contrive a tragedy, that you might play the hero at Luella Shoresby's deadly peril. But it shall avail you nothing, villain that you are!"

The next minute Markheim was sent reeling back, the beast-taming whip was snatched from his hand, and, with a significant gesture toward Reisbach, Grimwald and other attachés, Old Grip was springing headlong toward the tigers' cage.

All this had happened in infinitely less time than has been consumed in the telling.

Luella, still resolute, but panting, was holding off the most ferocious of the rampant brutes with one hand, while beating down the others with her Diana's bow, but not daring to look behind, and with her body pressed up hard against the bars of the den; it seeming merely a question of instants when blood would be drawn by fang or claw, and her destruction consummated on the spot as a consequence.

But, even at that critical instant, the dauntless detective was seen to plunge into the cage by the same spring-door that had admitted the huntress-queen to her apparent doom.

Then, swish, swish, swish! rose and fell with lightning-like rapidity the steel-stocked, iron-knotted, spike-jointed whip upon writhing striped bodies, and grinning, whiskered faces; while, even before Reisbach and others got in their jabbing work with prodding-sticks through the cage-bars from the outside, the cowed and appalled brutes were recoiling backward before the invincibility of a taming glance, shot out from under the detective's scintillating eyes, compared with which the ordinarily disciplining gaze was as moonlight to lightning, or as frost to fire.

Luella had sunk upon his bosom in a half-faint, and lo, it was Old Grip, instead of the designing Markheim, that was the public hero of the elaborately plotted and supremely realistic tableau!

But the danger was not fully surmounted, a last thrilling feature being still to come.

The worst tiger—he whose surreptitious admission upon the scene had originated the mischief—struck out a last blow with his mighty paw, in skulking, snarling and whimpering, back before the avenging whip.

One of the perfectly-molded, alabaster arms, drooping so listlessly from the detective's grasp, lightly scored by one of those striking claws, was suddenly streaked with a ruddy rill that began to drip upon the bottom of the cage.

The sight of the blood was enough. The cowardice of the beasts was transformed to madness in a twinkling, and, led by the tameless one, they wheeled for a renewal of their onslaught, while a fresh roar of horror went up from the horrified yet morbidly fascinated spectators.

"Quick—the rapier!" called out the detective, thrusting his whip hand through the bars, while keeping his gaze swervingly upon the flaming orbs of the infuriated brutes. "Quick—one specimen must be sacrificed, or we are lost!"

Markheim, with pretended eagerness, rushed forward with a short, thick iron club—whose ineffectualness in such an emergency none could know better than he—intending to thrust it into that beseeching hand.

"Back!" shouted Grimwald, interposing with the demanded rapier in his hand, while Reisbach

also, with a brow of thunder, waved the plotter to one side. "Back, 'ypocrite, back!'"

Then the sword was in Old Grip's iron grasp just in the last second of time, for the foremost tiger made his leap, but only to have his heart impaled on the stout, keen blade!

Almost instantly the cowering of the remaining tigers was completed; and, a moment later, the detective was standing in front of the cage, the fainting beauty still in his grasp, the dripping rapier still in his steel-like righthand.

Then, indeed, as Markheim stole out of sight like a whipped hound, amid a storm of execrations, which spoke eloquently as to the spectators' understanding of the situation's internal significance, there burst forth such a tempest of applause as had probably never been called forth in a show-tent before.

"No wonder!" grunted Reisbach, giving the signal for the next act, while Old Grip disappeared with his lovely burden behind the scenes. "If they haven't had their money's worth tonight, and with something to spare, the sightseeing public is even a bigger hog than I've generally believed."

Cheese-it, Olga and Ayettah had also disappeared.

And then, while Clown Grimwald began improvising some extravagances on the lowered trapeze, the band poured forth its inspiriting strains afresh, there was yet another anticipative roar, and Mme. Irmgard Hohenlohe, in her new specialty of "The Queen of the Amazons Preparing for Battle," was careering like the wind around the ring.

CHAPTER XII.

THE QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS.

It was fortunate that the master sensation of the evening "not down in the bills" should be followed by this equestrian feature, in which Mrs. Reisbach proved herself to be simply immense, literally, professionally and metaphorically.

Her great height and amplitude of person, which have been briefly alluded to, were transformed into war-like magnificence and Boadicean beauty, and, being moreover a superb horsewoman and mounted on an enormous steed of fine qualities, she filled the grandiose conception of this new part of hers with splendid capacity.

Clad in gilded armor from head to heel, and bestriding her charger bare-backed, her vast and powerful body, seemingly instinct with heroic energy, circled around the ring like a cataract of light.

Spear in one hand, spiked war-club in the other, the unbridled animal whose coursings she backed with such Centaur-like ease and grace seemed obedient to some subtle and electric law emanating from her frame. Her unloosed yellow locks floated back from beneath her helmet like a banner of rich light. Her blue, victorious eyes flashed under her nodding plume with a cruel fire.

A giantess and yet a goddess she appeared in her shining mail, and her grand Teutonic face, lit by the splendor of her battle-smile, seemed little less than transfigured with lofty and heroic yet barbaric purpose—a Genius of Victory, thrilled by the inspiration of Odin and of Thor, the very embodiment of the old free pagan North, when might was right and war the sole virtue of mankind!

Mr. Ringmaster and Proprietor Reisbach placed his hand on Grimwald's shoulder, where they stood a little apart, watching the stunning effect of the ponderously beautiful impersonator of the Amazon Queen upon the spectators.

"There's shekels in my old woman yet, my boy!" said he, complacently.

"I should say so, mynheer!" replied the clown. "What a stunner she is!"

"An, indeed! And to think of her as the slender Gretchen of twenty years ago, when we were first married, and before the little Olga was so much as thought of. Mein Gott!"—Reisbach sometimes fell back into his ancestral German when strongly moved—"and now this mountainous woman, this Titanic creature! It is scarcely realizable, my friend."

"Not as to the little Olga, at hall events," was the significant response.

"What do you mean, my friend?"

"Madame Irmgard, your wife, is not hany more 'ard-'arted than she is un'andsome, mynheer."

"And is not Mademoiselle Olga, our daughter, ditto, Grimwald?"

"That depends, mynheer. At hall events, she and the 'Indu contrived the trapeze accident, to help out Markheim with the tiger hepisechte."

Reisbach's face assumed a thunderous aspect.

"Purposed it, and at Eben Markheim's instance, you mean?" he gasped, in unaffected grief and surprise.

"Hexactly," and Grimwald forthwith told him the particulars of the warnings conveyed by Cheese-it.

"This, together with the rest of it, shall be rigidly investigated!" exclaimed Reisbach, in an agitated voice. "I shall have a plotting traitress at my fireside still less than a conniving villain in my show—advertisement or no advertisement;

though there is no denying that to-night's unforeseen peril to Luella will be worth thousands of dollars to our Combination."

He said no more.

Irmgard had now, after making the circuit of the ring several times, sprung to her feet on the back of the flying steed.

Having evolved the question of war in her Amazonian mind, she now prepared for battle, as a preliminary to summoning her wild woman-warriors to her standard.

Piece by piece, she divested herself of her glittering armor.

Away flew her shield in one direction, her helmet in another. Her resplendent breast-plate was torn aside, to the revelation of her grand bust and noble shoulders, partly clothed in a loose tunic of silvery material, like spun glass, bound at the waist with a broad crimson sash, fringed with bullion, at which a golden bugle hung. The greaves and cuisses went, until finally she was revealed in all the statuesque semi-nudity in which the fabled Amazons are supposed to have gone into battle with their masculine foes; her long hair streaming like a golden torrent in the wind, her lips parted, her brows cleared but somber—a terrible calmness—and her whole vast figure instinct with the fierce joy of prospective carnage.

Then, tossing her war-club into the same hand that clutched her spear, she snatched the golden bugle of her baldric to her lips, and wound, amid the pauses of the band music, a ringing blast such as might have aroused a nation of heroines to her queenly beck.

Instantly her Amazons, a glistening troop, similarly armed and attired, began to wheel into her train on their spirited steeds.

Prominent among the new arrivals was a beautiful bare-limbed page, or *pursuivant*, on foot (none other than the whilom Man-Ape, Cheese-it, in this new disguise,) and bearing a crimson banner, embroidered with golden lilies, with which he sped, like a fawn, in pursuit of the warrior queen.

Without checking her horse, she dropped upon one knee, and, as he came up, reached down for his hand.

The next instant he was at her side, relieving her of one of her weapons, and she, with the banner waved on high, and while flourishing her mighty spear, was leading her followers through one-brilliant equestrian evolution after another, in imitation of doing battle with powerful, though invisible foes.

The spectators were in ecstasies.

A fitting *finale*, this, for the realistic sensation of genuine horror that had preceded it!

A triumph of the ideal, following upon the heels of the unembellished actual!

Suddenly, as the boy-page reeled, as if stricken mortally by an invisible shaft, his mighty mistress snatched him up protectingly to her breast with her left arm, and with the other caused her spear to describe flashing circlings, as if in his defense against unnumbered foes.

"Tell me quickly now everything," she whispered, while this was going on. "Was Olga mixed up with that dastard plot of Markheim's against Luella?"

"She was, Ma'm Irmgard," was the boy's reply.

"Was it you that advised Old Grip of her danger?"

"It was."

"Tell me all you know, my dear."

Cheese-it did so in as few words as he could command.

"Heavens! what are we coming to?" was Mrs. Reisbach's sole comment as he concluded, though it was evident that she was more agitated than was allowed to appear. "That will do, my dear. You are a brave, faithful little fellow."

Then she set him down before her once more, and the performance wound up with a grand triumphal parade, as though in celebration of a decisive victory.

The Nautch girl brought the performances of the evening to a close with some of her graceful posturing, to the musical accompaniment of Sorab Drubbeljah on a shepherd's pipe, which also evolved the evolutions of some cobras whose poison-fangs had long since been extracted; and the spectators began to pour out of the tent, with such expressions as left no room for doubt as to the high appreciation with which the entire entertainment had been received.

Mr. Reisbach hustled across the darkening sawdust in the direction of the general dressing-room, with Grimwald at his side, as the lights were being extinguished.

"A magnificent free advertisement!" he muttered, half to himself, while rubbing his hands together with a businesssatisfaction that wholly engrossed every otherthought and consideration for the moment. "Zounds! That real tiger horror will be in everybody's mouth, and this is a populous region. More than that, it will be telegraphed all over the country. Aha! aha! Nothing like business, Mr. Grimwald, eh! Nothing like business."

"Even hourtrages can be made to pay 'and-some in the show-line," assented the honest clown. "But still, sir, I 'ope you haren't sorry as 'ow Miss Shoresby wasn't completely chawed up haltogether—though that would would 'ave

hadvertised us yet more hout-an'-houtly, so to speak."

"No, no, Mr. Grimwald, by no manner of means! How absurd! Investigation's the word, sir. By the way, where could Old Grip have gone?"

The subject of this inquiry was at this instant seen advancing toward them from the dressing-rooms, having already exchanged his picturesque ring costume for an every-day suit.

"Where and how did you leave Luella?" demanded Reisbach, with real anxiety, after the few preliminary words had been exchanged.

"In her private dressing-room, with good Mrs. Grimwald for company," was the reply. "Miss Shoresby, however, was already recovering when I left her to find a physician; and I doubt not she will speedily be herself again, though the shock she sustained was enough to upset the reason of an ordinary woman."

"Ah, I should say so! That Markheim shall clear himself of this fresh suspicion, Mr. Grippe, or out he goes! And as for that chap Gorgo, who so mysteriously disappeared to-night, with only half his tricks with the boa completed—"

He was interrupted by piercing screams.

"Luella's dressing-room!" exclaimed the detective, darting thitherward, followed by the others.

CHAPTER XIII.

LUELLA'S FRESH PERIL.

POLLY GRIMWALD was at the door of Miss Shoresby's dressing-room, gazing into it with clasped hands, and apparently paralyzed with terror.

She it was whose terrified screams had sounded the alarm.

"See, see!" was about all she could gasp, while pointing into the interior with a quivering hand. "Oh, my God!"

Thrust aside by the headlong entrance of Old Grip and his following companions, an unexpectedly awful sight met their gaze.

It was that of Luella Shoresby herself struggling desperately, yet dauntlessly, amid the folds of the largest boa constrictor of the combination!

"Leave it to me!" at this juncture exclaimed the deep and excited voice of Markheim from just behind the new arrivals. "I will save the young lady. Quick, Gorgo, quick!"

Simultaneously with the words, their speaker was dashed, reeling, back by a blow of the detective's elbow, and then Old Grip, bowie-knife in hand, was in the room.

It was all over in an instant.

When the others entered the serpent was headless, its limp and paralyzed coils in a quivering heap upon the floor, the rescued young woman, unharmed but sobbing, in the detective's arms.

"I had been gone honly for a hinstant to fetch some ice-water," Mrs. Grimwald managed to explain. "When I got back there was my poor dear young lady 'ugged up hin the 'ideous hophidian's folds!"

Luella was more quickly herself again than immediately following her rescue from the tigers' den.

"It must have concealed itself under the sofa on which I was reclining," she said, quickly withdrawing from the detective's arms, and striving bravely to compose herself. "Suddenly I found myself entangled in the coils. However, the serpent seemed only half-destructive, as if in a semi-torpor."

She sat down, trembling, and Polly threw her arms around her.

Old Grip sternly confronted Markheim and Gorgo, the knife still in his hand, as did also Reisbach and Grimwald.

"So!" said he. "Another skillfully-contrived horror, in order that you, Markheim, might enact the part of the self-sacrificing hero to the rescue of beauty in distress!"

"I don't know what you mean," growled Markheim, in reply. "I have never contrived horrors. The snake unaccountably escaped half an hour ago, and Gorgo and I had been hunting high and low for it, from one end of the sidestalls to the other."

Gorgo had thrown himself beside the body of the decapitated boa in genuine distress.

"The best, the loveliest, the most docile Brazilian in captivity!" he cried, with a sort of wail. "And now dead, dead, without a head!"

"At a loss of five hundred dollars to the show!" cried Reisbach, with a bankrupt intonation.

"Give me that sort of hanimal 'eadless hev-ery time, as a matter of cheice!" commented Grimwald.

Luella gave the detective an appealing look, and, as she was already dressed for the street, he at once proffered his escort to the hotel at which she was staying.

Hardly a dozen words passed between them on the way thither, and when he was leaving her at the entrance to her suite of rooms, she held out her hand, with a smile.

"How gentle and kind you are not to speak on these terrible subjects now!" she murmured—"just as gentle and kind as you are noble and brave!"

"The subjects—or rather the horrors—will keep well," he gravely responded, pressing his lips unrestrainedly to the beautiful hand in his own. "But there is one thing!"

"What is that?"

"You seem perfectly composed now."

"I am so."

"I would then humbly request a single word of explanation."

"Speak, sir."

"The circumstances of our last parting, in Hoboken, can scarcely have been wholly forgotten by you?"

"Forgotten? Oh, heavens!"

"You then said—I had just clasped you to my heart—that, for the present at least, an impenetrable gulf was between us."

"Yes, yes; that is—I—I—"

"Only enlighten me thus far, Luella. Is the gulf referred to our difference in fortune and position—the chasm between your wealth and my poverty?"

She snatched away her hand, regarding him with mingled indignation and reproach.

"Have I deserved such an insinuation, and from you?" she asked, coloring to the temples.

"Forgive me, forgive me! but still let me know what it is—what you meant."

"I cannot now. Do not press me. Oh!" with sudden passion; "cannot you see that—that my heart is yours just the same?"

Once more she was strained to his heart, and once again, an instant later, was he alone at the closed door, mystified, bewildered, happy or unhappy, he hardly knew which, with the dew of her responsive kiss still warm and lingering upon his lips.

Old Grip was rather surprised on the following morning to perceive that the show was being broken up, preparatory to being opened at Reading, Pennsylvania, the following night, and still more surprised at the explanation accorded by Mr. Reisbach, whom he chanced to meet on the grounds in Grimwald's company.

"I thought you would remain hereabouts considerably longer," said the detective. "Those gratuitous advertisements, you know."

"Will both spread and keep, my dear Grippe," was the genial response. "I had myself intended to skin this foreign State of Jersey of its dollars and small change before quitting its sacred precincts. However, you may some time learn that if man proposes, woman disposes. I have a business partner, my boy."

"Ah! then Miss Shoresby is averse to remaining longer in this locality?"

"Exactly."

"No wonder."

"Right you are, my friend. And, most fortunately, the tiger and serpent episodes are already flying over the country. You figure quite extensively in the reports, as a matter of course."

"Thanks, I am sure."

"Yes, yes. Oh, we are going to boom, my dear Grippe! though we are out just one tiger and one boa, to be sure."

"I hope you recognize the death-necessity in both cases, Mr. Reisbach."

"Certainly, certainly! Besides, the episodes more than offset the fatalities a hundred-fold."

"Hepisodes be blowed, myneer!" interposed Grimwald, wagging his head. "They're more pleasant houtside the tigers' den and the boa's fold than hinside, or I'm mistaken."

"Yes, yes; and perhaps no irreparable loss to the show, after all. Markheim says we can well spare that tiger, which would never have disciplined satisfactorily in any event; and Gorgo is quite sure that he can make a better trick-brute out of the remaining boa than he could have done with the other; though the latter's superior size was, of course, in its favor."

The detective looked at Mr. Reisbach in no little surprise.

"Do you mean to say, sir," he asked, "that those infernal scoundrels are to remain with the Combination?"

"Oh, that's all right, my friend. Valuable men, you see, valuable men!"

"Excuse me if I don't see anything of the sort. How about the investigation, upon which you were so insistent last night, sir?"

"Well, there won't be any. Those plot-charges will hardly wash, my boy; and as both Markheim and Gorgo are loud in their protestations of innocence—"

"Allow me to ask for Miss Shoresby's opinion as to this course?"

"She is naturally opposed to it; but as I, on my part, have agreed to up-stakes for Pennsylvania—"

"Consider my resignation as tendered, sir; as I shall consider it accepted from this moment."

And then, as the detective turned indignantly on his heel, in spite of Mr. Reisbach's protests, reinforced by those of Grimwald, Markheim himself hove in sight, with a peculiar smile on his sinister face as he marked Old Grip's discomfited look.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERVIEW.

THE detective sternly waved back Mr. Reisbach, who had started to hurry after him in more or less consternation, and, intercepting Markheim with a peremptory gesture, tapped him significantly on the breast.

"Don't imagine for an instant, Eben Markheim," said he, "that, because I separate myself from further professional connection with this show, you are thenceforth to be rid of my vigilance and espionage. You will find it just the reverse. The freer the foot the heavier the hand!"

"Are you really going to quit the show?" cried Markheim, with scarcely disguised satisfaction.

"The show, yes; but Luella Shoresby's interests therein and elsewhere—never!"

"Ah!"

There was something tolerably exasperating in the fellow's manner of saying this.

"Look here, you scoundrel!" exclaimed the detective, with forced coldness; "when are you going to tire—to get wearied, you know?"

"Tire of what—get wearied of what?"

"Of bucking against me, and getting thrashed out of your boots every time."

They were comparatively alone on the show-grounds, in front of a side-show tent not yet dismantled, containing the trick-grizzly, Chimborazo, and other animals, which were Markheim's special property.

The Herculean beast-trainer scowled, and then, half-consciously, threw himself into a wrestling attitude.

"I don't pretend not to be glad that you're going to quit the show, Mr. Old Grip," he sneered. "But your boast won't altogether wash."

"What do you mean by that?"

"If you've heretofore got the advantage of me in a personal encounter, it's because you've always caught me foul. That's what I mean."

The detective was thoroughly incensed and reckless, as he could become at times.

He gave a derisive laugh.

"It is such a claim on your part that won't wash, you cowardly, hulking cur!" he exclaimed. "Oh, it is too preposterous! Even with your chosen wild animals to back you, to say nothing of the devil's imp, Gorgo, I have outfought and outmatched you in every instance, as you well know."

"Words and wind! And as for your thinking that you're still going to play poodle-dog to Luella Shoresby's heels—"

"Stop right there!" interrupted the detective, in a white wrath. "If that lady's name crosses your foul lips again, it is at your peril!"

For answer, Markheim again threw himself into wrestling position, in such a way that the detective, in facing him, had the tent-door behind him.

Loosely clad in his favorite Turkish costume, he could not have been better attired for a wrestling bout than on the present occasion, and he reinforced his implied challenge with a coarse taunting laugh.

Nothing could have better suited the detective's present mood.

Off flew his hat, coat and vest with incredible rapidity.

"Mind out, boss!" yelled Cheese-it, at that instant putting in an appearance from one of the working groups not far away. "Treachery again! You'll have Chimborazo on your rear!"

Too late! for Old Grip had already made his panther-like spring, and the two men were already grappling as if for dear life, in a terrible catch-as-catch-can grip.

At the same instant Gorgo had tossed the tent-flap to one side, peered out; and then, with whip-stroke over his spine to expedite the movement, the giant trick-grizzly, Chimborazo, came ramping and roaring on his hind legs out of the tent, with his muzzle off, his mighty paws beating the air, as if anxious to hug all creation to death, and but too evidently solely on murder bent in behalf of his beloved master.

Cheese-it gave a yell, and straightway began to pelt the monster with the biggest stones he could conveniently handle, while the show-hands, including Mr. Reisbach and Silas Grimwald, came running excitedly upon the scene from every direction.

"Bring up some artillery!" shouted Grimwald, dancing about the bear with a short club in his hand and praiseworthy intention in his heart for fair play, yet careful to keep out of paw-range. "Fill him full of 'oles! knock a bale of 'ay out of 'im!"

"No—no more animal-slaughter!" cried Reisbach. "The show can't stand it. Get a block-and-tackle or something!"

"Hands off, all round!" called out the detective's clear cold voice, scarcely ruffled now even by the wrestling grapple in which he was apparently hopelessly tangled up, with worse danger in his rear. "This is my private fight, please to remember, gentlemen."

Then a shout of horror arose, for at this very instant, with the detective's back still turned, Chimborazo's ponderous hairy paws, with every six-inch claw nakedly unsheathed, were reared

high over his head, with the intention of raking him down head to foot.

But, little did they even yet know of the fighting qualities of the Showman Detective; and, moreover, at this critical juncture a brick, hurled by Cheese-it, with unusual precision, struck the grizzly full in the cavernous maw of his open mouth with tremendous force, propping the jaws apart and fairly staggering him, for the instant.

That instant was sufficient for the dauntless detective, who at once reversed positions with his human antagonist by a tremendous wrench; so that when the paws descended at last it was upon the nape of Markheim's own neck, in lieu of the piously intended mark.

The result was unfortunate for both bear and master.

There was a floundering flurry, during which the latter was laid out half-senseless, and denuded of the upper portion of his blouse-like garment, which had in some odd way become entangled over Chimborazo's head.

"Way, there!" called out Old Grip's clear voice once more. "Way, there!"

Simultaneously with this, Gorgo was doubled up with a flying kick in the stomach, that telescoped him with a dolorous howl; and then the detective was seen poising himself, fist at shoulder, at the side of the blinded, discomfited and still rampant grizzly, which, between the tangle of the Turkish shirt and the effort to swallow or spit out the brick-wedge still in his throat—he didn't seem to care much which—was in a decidedly frantic and puzzled predicament.

Then out flew the blow, like a bolt from a gun, catching the monster with such stunning precision directly behind the ear that he was incontinently made to measure his bulky length along the sod, where he lay twitching and snorting in a dazed condition.

Old Grip had already picked up Gorgo bodily and hurled him through the tent, and was about to essay a like task with the still prostrate Markheim, when Cheese-it, with a peculiar grin on his solemn little face, respectfully touched him on the shoulder.

He turned to perceive Luella Shoresby, mounted on her favorite brown steed, looking at him with a peculiar expression.

She motioned him to her side.

"I saw it all," she said in a low voice. "Please call upon me, Mr. Gripon, at my hotel within an hour."

He respectfully signed assent, and she galloped off.

By this time Markheim's friends had effected his disappearance, and Chimborazo was also being led away, gasping for breath and shaking his shaggy head quite ruefully.

The detective received the congratulations his exploit deserved, but paid little attention to these, and, attended by Cheese-it, passed on to his lodgings to make himself presentable.

"Boss," said the lad, with tears in his eyes, "if you leave the show, so do I."

"Ah! and why?"

"Ain't I your old little Ariel?" cried the boy, somewhat indignantly. "And didn't I learn the show business simply to follow your fortunes?"

"Of course you did, my little man," kindly.

"And sha'n't I keep on follerin' 'em to the end? Shall I desert my dear old master?"

"But you are under contract, and, apart from your other accomplishments, Reisbach couldn't get another Man-Ape in a hurry."

"That be blowed! Then he'll have to educate a real monkey in my place."

Old Grip only laughed, and, without giving the boy any satisfaction, hurried away to the hotel of Miss Shoresby, who was waiting alone to receive him.

CHAPTER XV.

LUELLA SURPRISES THE DETECTIVE.

THE beautiful Luella gave the detective her hand, with the same peculiar look he had marked in her face and eyes before.

Then, after motioning him to a seat in pleasant proximity to her own, she said:

"You are intent upon quitting the show?"

"I am."

"For what reason?"

"The better to look after your safety."

"But in the show your own life is in far more constant jeopardy than mine."

"That matters nothing to me, Miss Shoresby, and you ought to know it."

"I do know it, God bless you, my friend, my protector!"

She grasped his strong hand, her eyes and face lighting up, but as quickly dropped it, and resumed her business-like tone.

"Well, you will sever your connection with the show," she continued, "and I am glad of it."

He looked at her in surprise, not to say disappointment, for, loving her as he did, he had half hoped that she, as an equal partner with Reisbach in the concern, would have begged him to remain.

"You are glad of it?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I, also, have severed my connection with the show."

"You?" with increased astonishment.

"Yes," smiling as if enjoying his bewilderment.

"But you are a partner in the enterprise!"

"I have just sold out my entire interest to Reisbach, taking his notes as three-fourths' payment."

"Since when?"

"Within an hour—since I last saw you—since I learned that you, my friend, would no longer remain with us."

He seized her hand, and covered it with kisses. She submitted for a moment, and then gently withdrew it, saying:

"Let us talk business."

"Good! let us do so, Luella," and he was unimpassioned once more. "Well, I can't understand it."

"What is it you cannot understand, my friend?"

"That you should draw out of such a splendid and profitable enterprise as this Combination. That for one thing."

"Listen, then, as to that one thing. Reisbach has given me my own price, and, as he is rich and honorable, his notes are as good as cash."

"That is true."

"And he has promised to keep the matter a secret until I am far away. There will be no leave-takings."

"A shrewd thing, that!"

"I knew you would think so. Markheim will thus know nothing of it until I have disappeared."

"True, and his contracts with the show will prevent a renewal of his infernal pursuit of you, at least for a time."

"That is just it. Then I have just telephoned to the proprietor of our rival show, now performing, you might say permanently, at Madison Square Garden. He needs new capital and new blood. I shall probably become his partner. Ah, I see your eyes sparkle at this announcement, Grip!"

"And well they may! New York, as you know, is my favorite stamping-ground. There, if anywhere, I am at home."

"I knew that, or I might have turned my attention elsewhere." She laughed. "What, Old Grip! do you suppose I didn't know that you could look after my safety and interests better there, in the great city, than in roving and following the tent over this broad country? Well, what else is it you do not understand?"

"That Reisbach should consent to lose your professional services—the star attraction of the show."

"I gave moneyed satisfaction for that, as a matter of course. Then fortune further favored me in this predicament. Here in this very town this morning there came to me a certain Madame Lesteur, an old friend of my father's. She is an old animal-performer, but of late in hard luck, through a wretch of a husband, who had just run off from her with another woman and all her savings. Lesteur was praying for an engagement. I persuaded Reisbach to take her in my place. There you are! She is somewhat *passée*, but she will do."

"Excellent! But, how about Reisbach's dreams of an advertisement growing out of last night's tragic performances not down in the bills?"

Luella only laughed and snapped her fingers.

"That for his dreams!" she cried. "Our lives were in the balance—yours and mine, in the tigers' den. Why should we care? He can still have the *éclat* of the occurrence, for that matter."

"I understand. You would then slip back secretly to New York some time to-day?"

"Yes; with your assistance and under your escort."

"It can be arranged. You can introduce me to the Lesteur. She shall make herself up to impersonate you with the company till the last moment. In the mean time, we shall be off, bag and baggage, and none the wiser but Reisbach himself."

Luella burst into a laugh.

"Lesteur is forty-five, if a day," she cried, "and showing every hour of her age, poor thing!"

"No matter; I shall manage it."

"Of course you will—somehow."

"Now, one other thing, to complete this secret arrangement."

"What is it?"

"The boy Cheese-it must go with me."

"Ah! your little office-boy of old, as you have told me?"

"Yes."

"Reisbach will not want to lose his Man-Ape."

"That is just it, and yet the boy will be disconsolate apart from me. Moreover, he can help me greatly. He is a born detective's assistant."

"He shall go with us. I shall see that Reisbach is indemnified."

"I cannot thank you too much for this, Miss Shoresby."

"Then don't try it. Now, upon another

point: Doesn't it seem strange that we should so fear this Markheim, whom you have so repeatedly foiled, and have to-day again thrashed so unmercifully, with his grizzly thrown in?"

"It is his cunning and desperation that are to be feared!"

"I believe you. I am brave enough, but the very thought of that man makes me shudder, to say nothing of his hideous follower, Gorgo."

"Both shall be foiled and made to answer for their crimes."

"I hope so; at least, I believe you capable of anything."

"Thanks. What do you think of his claim—that your father left a signed and attested will, giving him, Markheim, half that he should die possessed of?"

"I have found no such paper among my father's personal effects. I cannot believe in its existence."

"But if you should find such a one?"

"I should, of course, respect its provisions, even to my own impoverishment."

"No need to tell me that. Where, allow me to ask, have you stored your father's personal effects?"

"In the great Oldham Storage Warehouse, in New York. Mr. Reisbach thought it best, after he had assisted me in searching them."

"What did they consist of?"

"Chiefly of an iron strong-box, full of business papers. We examined them all, without finding anything of a testamentary character."

The detective was about to ask another question, but at this juncture there was a peremptory knocking at the door.

Then Mr. Reisbach appeared, pale with suppressed excitement.

"What is this I hear, Luella?" he exclaimed. "That you have been telegraphing to Borepaw, of the New York Madison Square Garden?"

"Perfectly true, Mr. Reisbach."

"With a view to investing money in his combined show?"

"Perhaps."

"And doubtless also of taking part in his performances?"

"Doubtless."

"It isn't fair! I won't hear of it!"

"Oh, yes, you will, Papa Reisbach," complacently. "There is something you will do for me besides?"

"Indeed! What is that?"

"Release Cheese-it from his present engagement, I paying you a fair indemnity, of course."

Reisbach looked staggered.

"Preposterous!" he almost yelled. "I'll never do it!"

CHAPTER XVI.

IN NEW YORK.

BUT Reisbach did do it, after all—Luella had a persuasive will and way of her own in such matters; and Cheese-it accompanied the young show-proprietress and Old Grip to New York late in the afternoon of the same day.

Miss Shoresby was also accompanied by Polly Grimwald, in the capacity of her maid.

"I cannot help thinking how nicely we have managed it," said Luella, soon after the train had quitted Trenton. "Not a member of the company will suspect my absence until they see Mme. Lesteur taking my place as Diana in the tigers' den at the next performance. I really would have liked, though, to say good-bye to dear old Mamma Reisbach, to Silas Grimwald, and one or two others."

"They'll be 'owling mad, some of 'em," commented Polly. "But lawks! w'at would you, my dear young leddy? That 'ere Markheim would 'ave made some of the hanimals heat you hup 'ad you remained."

"The secrecy of our departure was chiefly due," said the detective, "to the admirable manner in which Mme. Lesteur impersonated you during the last few hours of our stay. This, of course, she was only enabled to do with her face veiled, or half veiled. But her imitation of your voice and manner was excellent. However, I discovered one thing less reassuring just before we slipped away."

"What was that?" asked Luella, a little anxiously.

"Olga will doubtless have a rival in La Lesteur."

"You mean—"

"That the latter had already shown signs of succumbing to the unaccountable fascinations of Markheim."

Luella said nothing, but it could be seen that she was ill at ease.

"I heard Markheim and Gorgo talking together soon after the boss laid 'em both out," said Cheese-it.

"To what effect?" asked the detective.

"They were pretty sore and revengeful. That was about all."

"But not suspicious of this fresh move on our part?"

"Not a bit of it, boss. They can't dream of it."

Nevertheless, no sooner had the party quit the drawing-room car, of which they had been the sole occupants, at Jersey City, than a long,

snaky individual, clad in black, crawled into view from under several of the unoccupied seats, where he had remained concealed during the entire trip, and looked after them with a peculiarly deadly look in his corpse-like face.

It was Gorgo, the Javanese thug, who had turned over his snake-taming duties to Sorab Drubbeljah, and was now on the track of Luella Shoresby and her faithful detective cavalier in the interest of his terrible master.

Gorgo shook his fist after the retreating party, and then slowly glided away upon their track.

A week after Luella had invested her money and professional talents in the Madison Square Garden Show, the detective came to her one morning and said:

"Have you ever inspected the exact compartment in the Oldham Warehouse in which your father's personal effects were stored?"

"I never have," was the reply.

"Wouldn't it be as well to do so?"

"Why, the warehouse company is surely responsible for the goods."

"True, but it might none the less be imposed on; and Markheim, as you must know, would like nothing better than to rummage over the contents of that strong-box you spoke of on his own account."

"Very likely; but Markheim must be still on the road with the Reisbach Show."

"Not necessarily, I think. He could have severed connection with it, as you did."

Miss Shoresby looked up in sudden alarm.

"Think you he can now be in New York?"

"I do not know; but if he is not yet in New York, Gorgo is."

"You astonish me! What makes you think so?"

They were in Luella's suite of rooms at the hotel where they were both stopping.

"This!" replied the detective.

He drew from his bosom and laid before her a long, bright, waving-bladed dagger.

"It is a Malay creese," he said, "and is also a common weapon with the thugs of Ceylon, Java and elsewhere in the Orient."

Luella contemplated the weapon with mingled wonder and repulsion.

"When did this come into your possession?" she asked.

"This morning, before I had arisen," was the reply.

"Heavens! and how?"

"Driven to the hilt in my couch on a direct line with my heart."

She turned pale.

"And you are doubtless a light sleeper."

"The footfall of a cat will usually awaken me, even from a sleep of deep exhaustion."

"Your room-door?"

"Locked, bolted, and untampered with."

"It was Gorgo?"

"Without a doubt."

"How could he have entered your chamber?"

"I see no other way unless by the open window, and mine is a third-story room. There is, however, a water-spout handy—for a monkey or a Javanese."

She shuddered.

"Tell me what you think."

"We have probably been tracked back to New York and secretly watched by Gorgo from the very first."

"But why would he not have assassinated you when having you thus at his mercy, in lieu of merely leaving this terrible warning of his power?"

"Doubtless because he thought the latter would be the more effective in terrifying you in Markheim's interest—as a starter in this new field. But this is all conjecture. The Javanese is prudent. Had we been in a country inn, instead of here in the heart of New York, it might have been different."

"And do you think Markheim is also in the city?"

"Hardly as yet, I think. He was last reported as doing his specialties in the lion-taming way with the Reisbach Combination out in West Virginia, and that was but two days ago. Thence the show was to proceed into Kentucky, and I hardly think Reisbach would have relieved him of his engagement; especially since La Lesteur has proved a mighty poor substitute for yourself, and the company has been otherwise weakened."

Luella drew a long breath.

"Nevertheless, I have a shuddering intuition that Markheim is also in New York at the present time," she murmured, uneasily. "I can feel that man's proximity, as I have sometimes felt, in my performances, the gleam of a tiger's eyes before encountering them. I wish there was some explanation for all this."

It was at hand, for at that moment there was a light, familiar tap at the door.

Then the boy Cheese-it entered, with a newspaper in his hand.

He was once more in his old capacity as the detective's assistant, not forgetting the mouse-colored suit.

"Here's a go!" he cried. "This is the only one of the morning newspapers with an account of it. Reisbach's gone to smash in a railroad accident!"

Old Grip took the newspaper, and read the report aloud.

It was a late telegram from West Virginia, reporting the complete demolition of the Reisbach show in a railroad disaster at a crossing of the Kanawha.

Many of the wild animals had been killed, others had escaped to the woods. The show was a wreck, probably beyond rehabilitation for the season.

"Poor Papa Reisbach!" sighed Miss Shoresby. "However, here is the explanation."

"Undoubtedly," observed Old Grip. "Your intuition was not at fault. Markheim is in New York."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STORAGE WAREHOUSE.

"You now see the propriety of investigating the place where your father's papers are stored, do you not?" asked the detective.

"I shall go with you at once," replied Luella, rising. "Polly, my dear!" she called.

Mrs. Grimwald made her bustling appearance from an adjoining apartment.

"Papa Reisbach has gone to pieces in a railroad smash-up," said her mistress. "Lay out my best walking-suit, and order a hack to be ready in ten minutes."

"Eavings and hearth!" ejaculated Polly, as she disappeared. "Owever, Silas has taken care of 'is dear body, I'm sure of that."

"One moment!" beseeched the detective, in a low voice, as Luella was about following her maid.

She came to a pause.

"Reisbach may be rich enough to stand his misfortune," continued Old Grip. "But those notes that you hold of his?"

Luella smiled.

"They are no longer mine," she replied, composedly. "My lawyer sold them for me day before yesterday."

And then, with another smile at his relieved look, she vanished.

"You will follow us, Cheese-it," directed the detective, turning to the boy, "letting nothing escape your observation."

Cheese-it made his most solemn bow, with his hand on his heart.

"Boss, I am your Ariel, your sprite, your obedient servant."

Upon arriving at the office of the Oldham Storage Warehouse—a great massive building not far from the hotel—Miss Shoresby made herself known to the clerk in charge, and requested to be shown to the compartment in which her father's personal property was stored.

The man looked up surprised.

"Certainly, ma'm," he replied, taking a key from a rack behind his desk. "But your agent was up examining the things only an hour ago."

"My agent!"

"Yes, ma'm."

Luella had turned pale, while the detective had preserved an unaltered countenance.

"I have no agent!"

The clerk looked blank, and then turned to his desk.

"Hers," he said, opening a sort of immense scrap-book, and pointing to a certain page, "is your signature, as left with us by Mr. Reisbach at the time the articles were stored in your name, ma'am."

"Correct; that is my signature."

"And here," tearing an order from a file, and laying it before her, "is the order on which the gentleman and his assistant obtained access to the property an hour ago. The one signature is a *fac-simile* of the other."

Luella and her companion eagerly compared the two.

"It is an admirable forgery, sir, this order," the former declared. "But forgery it is; and I have no agent other than this gentleman, Mr. Grippon."

The clerk looked blander yet, and he scratched his head.

"Is the property very valuable," he falteringly asked, knowing the responsibility he had incurred,

"That depends," was the reply. "It mainly consists of papers that my father left, more or less valuable, in an iron strong-box. But conduct me to the place of safe-keeping at once, if you please, sir. We shall soon be able to determine whether the papers have been tampered with or not."

The clerk took down yet another key from the rack.

"We had to dispose of the property in two separate compartments, owing to the crowded state of our accommodations," he said, after a brief consultation of his books. "The strong-box is in one cell on the third floor; the office desk and other chattels in another on the next floor above."

"An odd arrangement for an establishment like this! However, we will inspect both compartments, if you please."

Probably more flustered by the lady's extreme beauty than by the consequences to himself of the mistake that had been made, the clerk sum-

moned a porter, and gave him the keys with the necessary directions.

"Wait a moment," observed Old Grip, as they were quitting the office, with the faithful little Cheese-it at their heels. "There were two men who abused your confidence by the forged order, you say?"

This was after the exchange of a few whispered words with Luella.

"Yes, sir," replied the clerk.

"Describe them, if you please."

This was promptly done, and in such a manner as to leave no doubt of the surreptitious visitors having been none other than Markheim and Gorgo.

"Which of the two compartments did these men inspect?"

"The one containing the strong-box."

"How long did they remain therein?"

"Twenty minutes, I should say. They hadn't certainly been gone an hour when the lady," with a profound homage to Miss Shoresby, "first entered the office here under your escort, sir."

"Are you sure they did go at last—that they might not still be lurking around the building?"

"Oh, we don't allow any lurkers about our warehouse," replied the clerk, a little stiffly. "We're as particular as a safe-deposit company, we are!"

Nevertheless, he looked inquiringly at the porter, who, being a rather quick-witted fellow, had already absorbed the situation.

"After the men had given me back the key," said he, "they went straight to the elevator, and seemed to be in a hurry to get away. Of course, they could have quitted the building, as they doubtless did, without passing through the office again."

"All right!"

They were then conducted to the elevator by the porter.

Cheese-it was left on the watch at the bottom, with a whispered injunction on the part of the master.

"Why did you make those last inquiries so persistently?" whisperingly inquired Luella of the detective, on the way up. "If the scoundrels got what they were after, would they have lingered?"

"I don't know about that," was the reply. "Villainy is often eccentric."

"The compartment containing the strong-box first, if you please," she said, turning to the porter.

"That's No. 84," he replied, stopping the car at the third floor, where they stepped out.

He conducted them to the compartment, or caged cell, in question and pointed out the chest.

"There it is quite handy," he observed, "and just as those two gents left it. Here is the key to the other cage, which is No. 97, directly above this one on the next floor. Would you mind, sir, using it at your discretion while I attend to certain duties that call me elsewhere? A touch on that electric bell-button near the elevator will bring me back at any moment."

"I'll attend to it," said the detective, pocketing the proffered key and observing, "A well-spoken fellow, that!" as the porter hurried away with the air of a man having more affairs on his mind than he could well attend to.

They were left alone together in compartment No. 23, which was a counterpart of many others exactly like it in construction, though differing somewhat in size, ranged around the vast room, and filling in the center with great hollow squares of the same compartments, having narrow passages between, and all for the most part more or less crammed with household goods, pictures, trunks, *bric-a-brac* and the like.

The front only of the compartments was covered with a strong wire netting, giving them their cage-like appearance. The doors, in the netting, were secured by spring-locks. The structures ran up to within a few inches of the ceiling, which was lofty. Compartment No. 23 contained few other articles of storage than the strong-box referred to, most of the companion goods, which had originally necessitated the division of the Shoresby relics into separate compartments having been removed by their owner several days previously.

Luella and the detective at once inspected the chest, which proved to have been broken open, thus rendering unnecessary the key of it, which Miss Shoresby had produced immediately upon being admitted into the cell.

"Ah, they have been before us!" said Luella, as her companion raised the lid. "Well, let me run through the contents once again. The papers are not so numerous, I fancy, but that I can tell if any one of importance has been abstracted."

The detective improvised a seat for her out of an old hair trunk conveniently at hand.

Seating herself composedly on this, she began to arrange and inspect the numerous documents with which the chest was more than half-filled, with the rapidity of a person of thorough business habits.

It did not take long for her to get at the bottom of the box.

"I am quite sure that nothing of importance is missing," she said, at last, looking up at the detective with a puzzled expression. "What could that scoundrel Markheim have been after?"

Old Grip had stood watching her search silently and with folded arms.

"Let me try my hand at it," he remarked, with his stern smile.

He stooped, running his hand over and sounding the bottom of the chest, with a practiced air.

There was the click of a secret spring, and the bottom, a false one, flew back, revealing a shallow concealed receptacle underneath.

He took therefrom and held up before her the only article it contained.

"The contents of this receptacle was what he was after!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARKHEIM'S FRESH PLOT.

The object which he had taken from the secret receptacle of the chest, and which Luella had wonderingly received from his hands, was a large yellow envelope, newly torn open and empty.

"Read what is written on it," directed Old Grip, who had already scanned the writing.

Miss Shoresby did so.

The superscription was in her father's unmistakably bold and peculiar handwriting, to this effect:

"To be placed in the hands of my friend, Eben Markheim, after my death."

Then up in the left-hand corner, in smaller writing, there was a year date, showing that the writing was five years old, together with these words: "Document 57; duplicate elsewhere."

"This looks as if Markheim had obtained the document he coveted," commented Luella, after a pause.

"It looks like it, yes."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll have to talk this over some other time."

"But why should Markheim have asked my permission to make this search? Scoundrel as he is, and deeply as I loathe him, I would have wished to set the matter to rest. If my father left an attested paper, giving him half the estate, as he claimed, I am the last person to have withheld it, or to have obstructed his open search for it."

"Truly, and Markheim knows that as well as I do."

"Then why this skulking, forging, criminal secrecy to obtain what was his due, and what I would have freely accorded, in simple honesty?"

"Doubtless because he feared the real purport of the document he coveted. His surreptitious search has doubtless resulted in its discovery and in—disappointment."

"You think so?"

"I know, at least, that he has left the envelope behind. But, as I said before, this is a subject for future consideration."

Suddenly Luella put her finger to her forehead.

"Document 57; *duplicate elsewhere*," she repeated, slowly. "Let me see; didn't I note that number on one of the papers in this heap? I shall run them over again and see."

She at once set to work, undismayed by the irksomeness of the task.

"Let me suggest," said the detective, "that while you are thus engaged, I go up to Compartment 97, and examine the contents of the writing-desk."

"Excellent! it will save time."

And then, as he started away, she called after him, with her sweet laugh, that was such music in his ears:

"You have become no less my private secretary than my detective, haven't you, Mr. Gripson?"

"I would be and do anything in your interest, Miss—Luella," replied the detective, flushing. "Expect my return in a very short time." And he hurried away.

A sudden sense of isolation and loneliness fell upon the beautiful young woman as his footsteps died away, and she felt herself alone in the vast aggregation of cage-like compartments.

However, she studiously resumed her re-examination of the heap of miscellaneous papers, the more quickly to get out of the oppressive atmosphere of the place.

At last, to her great joy, she came upon a folded document, indorsed with the words, "No. 57, Duplicate," in red ink.

"Strange that I didn't think of looking inside this paper before!" she thought. "It may contain the secret for which Markheim has been striving."

As she was about to open it, a movement caused her to look up.

She with difficulty restrained a cry of terror—a thing she would have been ashamed of afterward, for Luella Shoresby was not of the fainting or exclamatory sort.

Markheim stood beside her.

He had silently slipped out from one of the

adjoining narrow passages, in which he had doubtless remained eagerly waiting for just this opportunity to confront her alone.

Having discarded his professional Turkish costume for a fashionable suit of the day, Markheim presented a handsome though sinister exterior; but he was contemplating the young woman with a stern and menacing gaze, which yet had something appealing in it.

He placed his finger across his bearded lips, as a sign of caution and secrecy.

"Luella," he began, in a low thrilling voice, "Luella—"

"Don't dare to address me by my first name!" she exclaimed, contemptuously, having fully recovered her nerve. "I have protection within—such protection as you have had occasion to feel the conquering force of more than once."

"You may find yourself mistaken there, Miss Shoresby," returned Markheim, calmly, and himself making no further effort to lower his voice. "But of that anon. What have you there?" And he eyed the paper in her hand suspiciously.

"It is none of your business!" And she thrust the paper in her pocket.

"We'll see about that, too—presently. You have doubtless divined that I have been before you in that chest to-day."

"Certainly; through forgery and criminal deception."

"It was the only course left me."

"Markheim, you are unquestionably no less fool than knave!"

"Indeed! Miss Shoresby is disposed to be complimentary."

"By no means, only truthful. You ought to have known that my honesty would not have stood in the way of your search in that chest for whatever paper belonged to you, much as I loathe and despise you" (he winced), "even though its possession by you would impoverish me."

"I didn't think that well of you, I confess," he admitted.

"Of course not. Well, you have got the paper intended for you from under the false bottom."

"I have!" and, drawing a folded paper from his bosom, he shook it before her triumphantly. "I have!"

"Much good may it do you!" with contemptuous coldness.

"What do you mean by that?" frowning.

"That I don't believe it amounted to as much as you anticipated."

He changed countenance.

"Ha! Let me see that paper you had."

"I shall not, I tell you."

He looked as if meditating mischief; but almost instantly changed in both tone and manner.

"But this is absurd!" he exclaimed. "Look! this is the paper I obtained out of that yellow envelope directed to me. It is your father's testamentary provision, duly attested and signed, devising to me one-half of the estate I should die possessed of. This was five years ago, and he made no subsequent will, by which omission you have been thus far profiting as the old man's sole heir. We were friends then. I had saved his life from a steamboat wreck, at risk of my own, and he was grateful. You perhaps do not believe it. Look—look, I say!"

He flashed the open paper before her eyes.

By the cursory glance she obtained of it the paper seemed to have the import he claimed for it.

"Do you believe me now?" he asked, triumphantly, as he refolded the paper and returned it to his bosom.

"If that paper is genuine," she replied, evasively, "giving you legal right to one-half my estate, I shall not dispute your claim for an instant."

"Genuine! Of course, it's genuine! How can it be otherwise?"

She made no answer.

"That paper you are concealing!" he exclaimed, with a return of his uneasiness. "What is it? I say I shall look at it!"

"And I say you shall not!"

She drew herself up firmly, confronting his masculine wrath with the cold, resolved splendor of her womanly beauty and equipoise.

Again he altered his mood.

"I love you!" he cried; "I love you to distraction, Luella Shoresby!"

"Pah!"

"You do not believe that I really love you, then?"

"I neither believe nor disbelieve. I don't care whether you do or not."

"For God's sake, don't exasperate me to frenzy!"

"Burn or freeze, it is immaterial to me."

He seemed to control his rage and mortification by a great effort.

"Listen!" and his voice grew subdued, persuasive and musical; "the law will establish my right to a moiety of half your handsome fortune."

"Let it, and welcome."

"But I don't want the money, if I can only have yourself, Luella. I love, love, love you!"

Be but my wife, and all shall remain with you. In addition to that I shall be your slave, your minion, your veriest dog! You can have no caprice that I shall not study to please, no wish that I shall not seek to gratify! Oh, listen to me with patience. As God is my judge, I love you to madness! Have pity on my love for very mercy!"

CHAPTER XIX.

TRYING SITUATION.

MARKHEIM had poured forth his burning words with a wild eloquence, such as many a woman, not aware of his true character, would have been proud to have evoked.

Luella's answer was to look him derisively in the face and then burst into a scornful, pitiless laugh.

It might have been a fearless, but it was scarcely a prudent thing to do under the circumstances.

No woman can afford to provoke the fury of a thoroughly bad and desperate man, especially when in his power.

Markheim staggered back, as if stricken and humiliated to the core.

Then he advanced upon her in a white wrath, menace in his clinched lips, mercilessness in his blazing eyes.

"You have doomed yourself!" he hissed.

"Luella Shoresby, you shall pay for this insult—pay for it after you are mine, whether with your consent or without it! In the first place, give me that paper you concealed."

Weaponless as she was, she for an instant waved him back by the simple majesty of a grand, repellent gesture of her gloved hand.

"Advance but another step, and it shall be to your doom, Eben Markheim!" she exclaimed, composedly. "My voice shall bring to my aid the man whom you have so much cause to dread and hate—Old Grip himself, who is only on the next floor above us!"

He burst into a fiendish laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he cried. "Think you I had not already provided for him beforehand? But this, Luella, was a piece of information I had reserved for the very last. He must even now hear our voices, raised as they are—if alive. Why, then, has he not ere this come rushing to your aid with his cyclonic energy and superhuman prowess? Is he not over-long in the compartment overhead?"

Luella had thought of this before, vaguely wondering at the detective's prolonged absence.

She turned pale.

"What do you mean, Markheim?" she demanded, for the first time beginning to feel faint. "What of Old Grip?"

Bending forward, to read the effect of his announcement in her shrinking eyes, he laughed a low, chuckling laugh, like that of a self-congratulating fiend.

"What of Old Grip?" he repeated, hissing through his bared teeth. "There is this about Old Grip. He lies in the compartment above, the victim of a cunningly-concocted surprise—bound hand and foot, and slowly, slowly strangling to death (if not quite dead already) with Thug Gorgo's throttling-cord wound and rewound about his accursed neck! I saw it done!"

Luella had turned ghastly white, rooted to the spot, her veins freezing, her brain a sickening whirl.

Markheim sprung upon her, seized her in his arms, and tore the coveted document—"No. 57, Duplicate"—from her pocket.

Then, springing out into the narrow passage, he swung the wire-netted door shut behind him.

It closed securely, with an ominous snap of the spring-lock.

"Save your accursed Old Grip, if you can!" he shouted, with a mocking laugh, and was gone.

Luella was in another instant fully alive in her inmost fiber to the terrible exigencies of the situation, but apparently too late.

Old Grip must be saved, if saved at all, by her unaided exertions; but here she was, a prisoner in a cage.

She seized the door and shook it with all the power of her strong arms.

The key in the lock on the outside dropped out, but that was all. The door itself, though rattling violently, was invulnerable to her assaults.

She strove to shriek for assistance. Hermouth was as dry as parchment, and the longed-for summons died unuttered on her lips. She reflected also, from the fact of her loud altercation with Markheim having passed unheeded, that in all probability not one of the warehouse employés would be within hearing of her shrillest scream, should she be able to give it utterance.

What should she do?

If not already dead, the detective, her friend, her protector, her dearest love (yes, she confessed it to her own heart now), might at that very moment be in the final agonies of strangulation.

She glanced up, noticed that the walls of the compartment failed to quite reach the ceiling,

and, with an inward cry of thankfulness, her resolution was taken.

Thrusting her parasol through the wire lattice, under the vague impression that it might be of some after-use, she began to climb up the lattice-work like a cat.

Discommoded of her fashionable clothing, and in her professional costume, this would have been but the work of an instant to one of her gymnastic skill and acrobatic training.

Even as it was, she performed the feat with surprising rapidity, though it seemed little short of an age to her.

There was barely a foot's space between the top of the lattice-wall and the ceiling.

Nevertheless, robustly built though she was, she managed to squeeze through somehow.

Then she was in the corridor outside the gate, and seizing her parasol like a sword, she rushed back in the direction of the elevator-shaft.

This she found, but the car was at the bottom, and not once did she think of the electric button of which the porter had spoken.

The stairway! Surely there must be a stairway somewhere, and Old Grip had doubtless availed himself of it in reaching the next floor above. Didn't they always have stairways, as well as elevators, in such buildings?

However, she could perceive none, though she skirted the walls, or rather the inner line of compartment facings, with frantic suspense in the vain hope of perceiving one.

Had she looked toward the center of the building, her desire would have been gratified; for there, sure enough, was the spiral iron staircase that pierced the edifice from basement to roof; but she was almost beside herself, and did not think of looking in that direction.

Had any other life but Old Grip's been at stake, and she bent on saving it, it would have been different; she would have been cooler, more self-possessed; but now—well, it was Old Grip's at stake, and she loved him.

That is all that can be said of the strange excitement that seemed to metamorphose her whole nature, making an ordinarily frenzied, bewildered woman out of one accustomed to cool courage and fearless self-possession.

Suddenly a thought occurred to her like an inspiration.

The capacity of the hollow elevator-shaft was remembered, even if the electric button—a touch upon which would have brought the sturdy porter instantly to her assistance—was wholly forgotten.

An instant later, she had torn open the wire door leading into the shaft, and was making her way up the car-rope hand over hand, with the parasol—that inevitable parasol—between her teeth.

By great good fortune, the shaft-door on the next floor above was unfastened.

She bounded through it, and led by a sort of instinct, rushed straight to Compartment 97.

A single glance through the latticed front of the compartment disclosed a terrible spectacle.

CHAPTER XX.

LOVE'S DEVOTION.

THE fiendish Markheim had not exaggerated the horror of the detective's predicament.

Partly propped against a desk, whose contents he had been examining when surprised by his cowardly assailant, there, inside the closed compartment-cage, lay the redoubtable Old Grip, almost black in the face, and apparently *in extremis*.

Yards of fine but stout cordage were wound round and round his body, pinioning his limbs as effectually as if he had been immeshed in the web of a Brobdingnagian spider, while tightening around his neck was the thug's strangling cord.

At first she thought him dead, and her fluttering heart stood still within her laboring breast.

Then she perceived that he breathed, though by faint snatches.

Another glance showed her the fortunate chance that had intervened between Old Grip's instant death and the deadly cord.

The latter, in making its throttling coil, had partly caught behind, doubtless without the knowledge of its assassin-manipulator, under the collar of the victim's coat, though burying itself deeply in the throat and side-cords of the neck.

To this circumstance alone he owed his escape from death as instantaneous as ever leaped upon the heels of the bow-string's deadly twist in the marble seclusion of a Turkish seraglio, or amid the palace dungeon-crypts of old Algers.

All this the agonized young woman took in at almost a single glance of her frenzied eye.

All depended on her individually. This she felt so powerfully, so jealously, that now, even with the gift of frantic utterance restored to her, she would not have thought of expending it in a single scream for aid.

"Edward!" she cried, in a strangely-hoarse and muffled voice—fragments torn from a breaking heart; "my friend, my life, my darling! Cling to life but for another minute's space! It is I, Luella, who am here to save you!"

He opened his eyes and looked at her—only

once—then closed them once more, and the horrible gaspings for life-breath were resumed.

She grasped the lattice door, shaking it in her athletic grasp as if she would rend it from its steel fastenings.

In vain! Like the manacles upon a bondsman in hopeless thralldom, it rattled, but held firm.

A desperate presence of mind returned to her.

She glanced up over the lattice-front. No time to scale it and squeeze through between the ceiling and the top, as she had done in the compartment below. The victim, already so far gone, might be dead before relief could reach him in that way.

Then her foot struck against the parasol, which she let fall immediately upon reaching the harrowing scene.

A thought, a suggestion flashed upon her like a revelation, and was as quickly acted upon.

In a minute or two she had produced a small, delicate penknife, which she always carried with her, opened it, and firmly lashed its tortoise-shell handle to the ferule end of the parasol-stick with some bits of twine that were lying about.

Then, with her heart in her throat, but with a hand as firm as was ever master-surgeon's in the performance of a life-and-death operation, she thrust the parasol through the lattice-work, and began the task of deliverance.

Two careful slashes of the delicate blade were sufficient to sever the choking cord, and the strangling man drew a great, long breath of supreme relief.

Then, as with another sweeping stroke or two his bonds were severed, he struggled into a less inert and supine attitude, she uttered a great, hoarse cry of joy.

"You live!" she cried; "God be praised, you live!"

He opened his eyes.

Gifted as she naturally was with feminine charms, Luella Shoresby was scarcely appearing at her best in that trying moment.

Her fashionable clothing was torn and soiled with her scaling feat on the floor below. She had lost her becoming hat, and her golden locks, disheveled by her frantic exertions, were streaming loosely down her shoulders. Her kid gloves hung in tatters upon her hands, showing the glitter of her diamond finger-rings, as a species of tryste upon the unbecomingness of her situation.

But Old Grip, even in the throes of death, had heard those expressions of love from her dear lips (love for him!) and the vision of a rescuing angel from heaven itself could not have been fairer or more grateful to his rebrightening eyes than was Luella Shoresby at that moment in the unkempt *déshabillé* that was the proof of her devotion and her love.

His lips moved, at first without a sound, and then just audibly.

"The electric button!" he gasped. "At side of elevator! Don't you remember?"

Yes, she remembered now. Ah! how could she have forgotten?

But as she joyously turned to rush to the elevator, a faint, muffled cry, a cry of warning, burst from the detective's parched lips.

Reason enough!

Gorgo, the thug, was creeping toward the cage, doubtless not having been able to resist the temptation to return thither, to reassure himself of the thoroughness of his deadly work.

He had just come to a pause, upon perceiving the changed situation, his corpse-like, yellowish face the picture of disappointed rage and hate.

Luella at first stood stock-still.

Then she sprang upon him with a tigerish bound, and something very like a tigerish snarl under the stolid womanly cry that marked the fury of her onset.

Her shapely but muscular hands fastened upon the wretch's throat, their tapering fingers fairly burying themselves into his sallow flesh.

Strong man as was the Javanese, and supple as a serpent, after the manner of the Oriental athletes, he was but as a reed in the swaying, see-sawing energy of her powerful grasp.

Then she hurled him from her, seemingly as with the force of a catapult, and he went reeling backward a dozen yards or more, after which he fell prone on his back, and went tumbling head over heels with sinuous and writhing contortions, like those of a wounded snake.

Recovering almost instantly Gorgo sprung to his feet.

There was a lightning-like movement, and then a glittering Malay creese, similar to the one Old Grip had found sticking in his bed that morning, flashed in his hand, his cadaverous face blazing with a lurid light, like that of the hooded cobra at its spring.

But he seemed to think better of his hostile intention, and, with the hissing words, "Another time! another time!" suddenly glided with surprising swiftness out of sight up one of the long, narrow passages between the storage compartments.

Luella lost not another instant in springing to the elevator-shaft and tapping the electric-button, not once, but twenty times.

The car was still at the bottom of the shaft, but the alarm must have gone jarring and jin-

gling at a great rate through the ground-floor, for the wire rope almost instantly trembled on the rise.

But here there was a stealthy, lightning-like movement.

Luella had just time to avoid the full down-stroke of the Malay creese, intended for her heart, and then, with a cat-leap, Gorgo was on the quivering wire rope, descending it with all but incredible rapidity hand-over-hand, the knife between his teeth.

Luella had hardly time to lean over and look down the shaft before he was seen to reach the top of the car and leap noiselessly out from it upon the first floor before it had quite cleared the top of the wire gate.

Then she shrunk back with a burning blush, gathering the left side of her dress-waist together with a trembling hand.

Without so much as grazing the delicate skin beneath, the descending creese had cut through her upper clothing on that side like a razor, including even the corsage.

The car came up with a rush, and two porters, including the one who had escorted her and the detective up from the office, sprung out with consternation depicted on their faces.

CHAPTER XXI.

AFTER-BREATHS.

DISREGARDING the stares of the men, Luella hurriedly guided them to the compartment in which Old Grip was lying, still practically speechless and powerless, though rapidly rallying his broken powers.

"Quick! down-stairs with him at once," cried Luella, authoritatively. "All shall be explained in season. Air and ice-water are what my friend wants now. Never mind staring from him to me, but dispatch, dispatch!"

They obeyed without ceremony, unlocking the compartment door, helping the detective to his feet and almost carrying him to the elevator.

"Only Jim and I chanced to be in the building when you rung the electric," explained the original porter on the way down. "Everybody else had gone around the corner to dinner."

As the elevator-compartment stopped at the ground floor an unexpected spectacle presented itself on the landing just outside the shaft.

True to his trust, Cheese-it had kept up a vigilant outlook for suspicious persons in that quarter.

Gorgo had but jumped out from the top of the rising car to find himself uncompromisingly confronted by the fearless lad in the mouse-colored suit.

The contest was that of the two, thus unequally matched, engaged in the most unique of rough-and-tumble contests.

The Javanese had in some way lost or rendered useless his knife, with which he would doubtless have quickly disposed of his small but agile antagonist, and the disparity between the two was thus modified in a measure, though by no means obliterated.

Cheese-it, however, had already deprived Gorgo of one of his coat-tails (the Javanese having assumed a suit of decent and funeral black since entering upon New York life), and now, despite some hard bruises he had received, was adopting the novel tactics of dashing between his antagonist's long legs, and upsetting him over and over again as fast as he could regain his feet.

It was quite evident that the Javanese now only hoped to escape from the building, which Cheese-it was just as determined that he should not do, if his own leap-frog tactics could prevent.

"Monkey! ape! baboon!" furiously screamed Gorgo, in his shrill, hissing voice; "I will fang you, I will twine and twist you to death!"

"Not much, old Snakeship!" laughed the boy, again sending his adversary sprawling by a well-executed dive between his spidery legs. "We're not in one of your native jungles now, but on Manhattan Island—please to remember that."

Here Gorgo regained his feet once more with more surprising agility than at any time previous, and, instead of clawing at the lad as theretofore, he aimed a flying kick at him that ought to have deprived Cheese-it of his head, had it only landed where intended—which it didn't.

Dexterously ducking under the flying foot, the lad, still laughing, lowered his head yet further down, and then executed a new maneuver on his own account.

He bounded forward, like a billy-goat on the war-path, butting Gorgo with such force in the pit of the stomach as to knock him endwise three or four yards away, while the lad recoiled as far backward from the impetuosity of the blow he had delivered.

All this in much less time than it has taken to describe it, and before the astounded occupants of the descending car could fully comprehend the situation.

"Hurry! open the gate!" screamed Luella at this juncture. "Quick! seize that man. He is a murderous villain!"

The porters lost no time in obeying the first

part of this injunction, but were too late for the seizure demanded of them.

No sooner had they sprung out of the shaft than Gorgo, again regaining his feet, sped away with tremendous velocity, and, gaining the street, disappeared in a flash.

"Shall we chase him?" cried the porters, divided in their eagerness to pursue and their concern for the detective's condition. "Shall we put the police on his track?"

"No," replied Old Grip, in a stern but faint voice—he was now leaning on Luella's arm just outside the elevator. "I will attend to that man's case in good season."

Cheese-it had sprung to his beloved master's side, and seized his hand, consternation and sympathy in his wizen but intelligent face.

"Oh, Lord!" he whimpered. "What have they been doing to you, boss?"

"Never mind, my lad. Too long a story for the present."

They led him into the inner office of the manager, a comfortable and luxurious room, with most of the appliances necessary for the further recuperation of the shattered man.

In a short time Old Grip was something like his old self once more.

Then the manager and his clerk returned, and were given an outline of the tragic occurrences.

"Shall we notify the police this instant?" cried the manager.

"By no manner of means, sir," replied the detective, with something of his old coolness and decision.

"But such an unparalleled outrage! Though its publicity should give our warehouse a bad name, in common justice—"

"Let there be no publicity, then," interrupted the detective, peremptorily, and Luella nodded her assent. "I'm a detective officer, and prefer to have the matter remain in my own hands. My name is Edward Grippon, otherwise known as Old Grip. Perhaps you have heard of me before."

"I should say so, sir!" exclaimed the warehouse manager, and he stepped back with a gesture of profound respect, as did also the clerk and the two porters. "It seems simply amazing that you should desire to follow up such murderous villainy single-handed, Mr. Grippon, but your wish shall be respected. There shall be no publicity." And he glanced at his subordinates with a warning look.

It seemed little less than astounding to both Luella and Old Grip upon their being informed that it was less than an hour since they had first entered the warehouse office.

Cheese-it, who had been dispatched for a conveyance, now returned with a close-coach, which they quickly entered, Cheese-it taking a seat beside the driver, who had orders to waste no time in taking his fares back to their hotel.

"Let us not exchange our adventurous confidences just now," said the detective, taking his companion's hand as they were driven off. "Time enough for that this afternoon, and I am still pretty well rattled, as they say. Only to sit here beside you for the present is joy and consolation enough."

She strove, but with very poor success, to return his worshiping gaze with something of her old business-like air; and then, after a moment's surrender of her hand to his fond clasp, slyly withdrew it.

"It will be better to talk but little of those shuddering experiences just now," she replied. Then, looking down in dismay over her ruined dress—she had bound up her sunny hair and recovered what had been left of her hat and feather: "Oh, dear me!" she exclaimed, disconsolately; "what will Polly say to my coming back home in this condition? Why, I positively dread the ordeal of merely flitting into the hotel from this carriage!"

"You needn't. Your appearance is the badge of your heroism; and, in a lower voice, "all for my sake."

"But I am a perfect fright!"

"You are an angel!"

"Don't especially when you know that I have the temper of a fiend at times. Thank the Lord, this is Saturday! Only to-night's performance, and then a whole day and night of rest."

"You mustn't think of performing at the Garden to-night. You will not be equal to it."

"Will I not? Did you see me take Gorgo by the throat and hurl him back spinning?"

"Yes."

"Well, my second nerve had returned to me then. And look here!"

She held out her strong, beautiful hand—long since denuded of its tattered glove—and showed him that it was untrembling as a rooted rock.

Here they reached their destination.

"Boss," whispered Cheese-it on the sidewalk, as Luella vanished into the hotel private entrance, "I saw one of 'em spying after us."

"Which one?"

"Markheim. He just took one squint into the coach, saw who its passengers were, and then skipped out of sight, with a scowl on his mug a foot broad."

"Never mind that now. Come help me wash

and dress, my boy, and then you shall lunch with me in my room."

The boy gladly obeyed.

Late in the afternoon, when the Showman Detective felt that he was thoroughly himself again, he went to find Luella; but found her with a roomfull of company—human fragments of the Reisbach Combination wreck, now gravitating, one by one, back to New York, as the natural haven of refuge for show people in hard luck.

Reisbach was there, with his wife and daughter, while Clown Grimwald was paying his respects to his wife, and giving a serio-comic account of how the traveling show had come to grief.

CHAPTER XXII.

SCATTERED REMNANTS.

LUELLA'S visitors were as cheerful and happy-go-lucky over their professional misfortunes as could be, with the exception of Mr. Julius Reisbach himself, who was unaffectedly brooding and irritable.

In fact, his mood was that glum and savage that even Luella's account of her own unhappy adventures of the day, together with Old Grip's narrow escape, had not served to modify the outward expression of it.

"Humph!" he had ejaculated just before the detective's entrance upon the scene: "I suppose you'll next be marrying that cast-iron detective, and before long, at that."

"Don't be a fool, Papa Reisbach, and perhaps I'll find time to console with you in your misfortunes—when my own complications give me the leisure," Miss Shoresby had sweetly responded. "Let me order you something to drink now, and then you can tell me whether Minotaur and Chimborazo were among the animals killed, lost or wounded."

"No, they were not," Reisbach had gruffly replied, while accepting the refreshment proffered, as did the others in a decidedly more grateful spirit. "No such bad luck for that rascal, Markheim, who was the first to desert me on the heels of the smash-up, after making arrangements for Chimborazo's instant shipment to Steiche & Co., in New York. No wonder Markheim has been showing his own teeth to you and Old Grip again. There is no conscience or decency in the man!"

This had been said with a savage look at his infatuated daughter, the fairy-like Olga, who had only tossed her pretty head, without blushing in the least; and Luella, knowing Markheim's secret influence over Reisbach, had quietly accepted the latter's ill-temper in that quarter for what it was worth, and no more.

Then Old Grip had put in his appearance.

"Grippon, I'm ruined!" exclaimed the show proprietor, confidentially, as soon as he had the chance.

"Not so bad as that, but only hard hit, I fancy," replied the detective, a little coldly; for, though rather liking Reisbach personally, he could never quite forgive his mysterious complacency with Markheim's villainy. "An old showman like you ought to soon be on his feet again."

"Well, the season's hopelessly lost for me, at least," growled Reisbach, "and the insurances won't half-cover my actual property-loss. By the way, two of those Central Park lions belong to me, as you are doubtless aware."

"Yes."

"By the way, I'd like to have your opinion of their value before I see Steiche about them. To-morrow or any other day will do; and Luella has already promised me to take a look at the beasts at her leisure."

"You are surely not going to sell out your collection?"

"I think of doing so, if Steiche & Co. can get anything like its true value for me. Perhaps Borepaw might want a few of the beasts. I shall see him to-night about it. At all events there is always a demand for good lions, and that pair up at the Park are hummers, if they haven't been spoiled."

And so he went on talking of his private griefs and affairs until the detective, anxious for his anticipated comparison of mental notes with Miss Shoresby, heartily wished him gone, together with his friends.

But this was not to be as yet. The waifs from the wreck were rather enjoying themselves at Luella's expense for the nonce, and had already engaged accommodations at the same hotel, which was a favorite resort for show people and others of that ilk.

Presently there was a knock at the door, and Mme. Lesteur became one of the visiting party.

Old Grip's secret impatience was increased, for he had mistrusted this woman from the outset, and his discovery of her almost instant infatuation for the Satanically handsome Markheim had naturally not modified his first impression.

Now almost her first words were to the sore point, though doubtlessly without intention.

"I just exchanged the time of day with Mr. Markheim at the hotel entrance," observed Mme. Lesteur. "He was looking splendidly, but seemed in a nervous hurry and could not stop

for more than a dozen words with me, much as he would like to linger, so he said."

This was said with a covertly-triumphant glance at Olga, who only bit her pouting underlip and paled a little; while the rest of the visitors, knowing of the warehouse adventures, looked uncomfortable.

"What shall you do, dear Madame Lesteur?" asked Luella, with her customary sweetness, "now that you are once more adrift?"

"I really do not know, my dear Miss Shoresby, unless you will intercede for me with Mr. Borepaw for a fresh engagement of some sort. By the way, you are also his business-partner, I hear."

"Yes; but engagements are not going a-begging. And I have already promised for Mr. Grimwald; and it's ten to one that both the Drubbeljabs have applied to Borepaw by telegraph ere this."

"My dear Miss Shoresby," pathetically, "I was your poor, dear father's intimate friend."

"A long time ago, yes. However, you can trust me for doing the best I can, Madame Lesteur."

La Lesteur sighed and consented to participate in a fresh round of liquid refreshments that was on the point of circulating.

She was a splendidly-formed woman of about forty-four or five—a French brunette, with superb black eyes, who had evidently been very handsome in her youth, and with many of her attractions still not outworn, but there was a furtive suggestiveness about the woman, and her splendid eyes were as hard as they were brilliant.

But still the guests hung on, even remaining to dine with Miss Shoresby in her apartment, and the hour came for her to hurry away to her professional duties in Madison Square Garden without the detective having obtained the coveted private discussion with her.

Nevertheless, he accompanied her in the brief carriage-drive to the Garden, and she whispered, with a slight pressure of the hand, as he handed her out at the private entrance to the show:

"To-night, after the performance, my dear friend."

"Yes, if we are granted the opportunity," he grumbled.

"We'll make one."

"In the mean time, I'll be on the watch, and Cheese-it has his cue. I half suspect that neither Markheim nor Gorgo can resist the temptation of witnessing your performance."

She disappeared in the direction of the green-room, and Old Grip began to circulate with apparent unconcern among the fast-filling benches, after exchanging a sign with Cheese-it, whom he soon despatched industriously on the alert, according to previously conceived instructions.

The Borepaw show—a combined menagerie and circus enterprise—had thus far, after several months' trial, demonstrated the profitability of its chief proprietor's pet idea, that of a permanent or at least prolonged location as a standard attraction in the center of the great metropolis; and Luella's professional duties therein, at a huge compensation, and in addition to her financial investment in the business, were much the same as she had fulfilled primarily under her father's management, and subsequently in her business connection with Mr. Reisbach.

That is, they included her famous animal-taming act and her equestrian performance, in which she was no less without a rival in the show business of that day.

Her recent additional prestige had gone before her, and the Madison Square Garden Show was practically reaping the benefit of the dramatic tableaux "not down in the bills" at Trenton, upon which poor Mr. Reisbach had counted so much as a free advertisement for his now defunct enterprise.

There was an enormous Saturday night's attendance on this occasion, and Luella's great act of Diana in the Tigers' Den had gone off with even more than the customary *éclat*, but without the detective or his assistant detecting the presence among the spectators of those for whom they were so eagerly on the alert.

At last, however, as Luella made her appearance in her equestrian performance, Cheese-it, who was separated by a considerable interval from the detective, made a significant sign to the latter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HEBREW ENTHUSIASTS.

OLD GRIP quickly approached his bright-eyed little assistant, in response to the latter's signal.

Cheese-it indicated, by a scarcely perceptible gesture, two odd-looking men, apparently of the Jewish race, the one tall and powerfully built, though with snowy hair and beard, the other also tall, but of skeletonian leanness, with bushy black beard and hair.

They were occupying high-priced seats, on the lower row nearest the circus ring, and were so enthusiastic in their foreign-like applause as to excite the amusement or resentment of their neighbors, as the case might be.

A single glance was sufficient for the Showman Detective to reward Cheese-it with a slight nod of approbation and acquiescence.

In spite of the excellence of their disguise, which even included a fictitious aquiline in their nasal organs, he had instantly recognized Markheim and Gorgo in the pretended Hebrews.

He made a sign to Cheese-it, and a moment later they had slipped with apparent unconcern into a couple of vacated seats directly behind the gesticulating and enthusiastic pair of counterfeits, neither of whom gave any signs of uneasiness at the new-comers' proximity.

At this juncture Luella, a dazzling vision of feminine loveliness in tights and spangles—her cheeks flushed, her blue eyes sparkling, her loosened golden locks streaming back over her shoulders like a meteor of the northern lights—was careering around the ring in the full glory of her equitation act, amid the tempests of admiring applause.

"Oh, mein Gott Almighty, Mr. Solomons! isn't dot loafy?" cried the disguised Markheim, fairly bounding in his seat while partly embracing his companion. "Vot a feash for der eyelids dot loafy voomans makes, Mr. Solomons!"

"It ish goot, Mr. Moses," admitted the other, more sedately. "Der voomans ish heabenly, und dot is vine horzmannsheep."

"Goot! heabenly! Ach! it ish—it ish deliriums! Vot a vine t'ing dot we haft got a bass to co pehind de scenes vrom dot Mr. Borebaw! We make de bersonal acquaintance off dot divine, dot fascinating young voomans."

Aad so, without paying the slightest attention to the new arrivals behind them, the pretended Hebrews continued to rave, until at last summarily quieted by indignant protests on the part of some of their annoyed neighbors on the adjoining benches.

"The deuce take these vulgar chaps!" muttered one of the latter quite audibly; "they seem to think the performance intended for their individual delectation."

The detective was puzzled.

The counterfeits must be perfectly well aware, from our proximity, that we have penetrated their disguise, and yet they keep up the game as if at perfect ease with their own duplicity. What can it mean?

He was not a great while in finding out.

Luella's performance came to an end, and she dashed out of sight with a parting salvo of applause.

The pretended Mr. Moses sprung to his feet, with a sort of respiratory huzza in broken English.

"Gome, mein friendt!" he cried, seizing his more phlegmatic companion by the arm. "Gome, Mr. Solomons! We co to de green-room, unt maybe Mr. Borebaw introduces us to dot macknivizent young voomans."

They accordingly hurried away in the direction of the green-room, amid a chorus of half-suppressed jeers, and were followed at a prudent distance by Old Grip and his companion.

"Keep behind me and well out of sight, but within observation distance," whispered the detective, as the two reached the region apart from the spectators, and devoted to the general dressing-room for the minor performers, the smaller rooms for the accommodation of the star lady performers, the grooming stables, and the like.

The boy obediently dropped back out of sight, and the detective gained a place of concealment near the door of the green-room just as the pretended Hebrews entered it, and were being received with exceptional urbanity by Mr. Borepaw.

The latter, a man past the middle age of life, was a rather coarse sort of money-maker, but with business tact and native shrewdness written all over his bustling, rather good-natured personality.

But, in spite of his smiling demeanor, Mr. Borepaw was just now speaking a little more peremptorily than was his wont—to possibly profitable visitors, of whatever condition, sect or nationality.

"It is out of the question, gentlemen," he was saying. "Miss Shoresby never receives introductions here, and she is now getting ready to return to her hotel. Ah, here is Mr. Grippon, her business manager." The detective had coolly stepped forth, disclosing himself. "You might confer with him as to the lady's inclinations for further investments in the show business."

"What do the gentlemen wish to know?" inquired Old Grip, politely, and without the faintest suggestion of suspecting the disguised men's identity.

The *pseudo* Mr. Moses began an elaborate explanation of some sort of dramatic enterprise that he and his friend, Mr. Solomons, were projecting, with a sort of female Mazeppa part, in which they thought that Miss Shoresby's beauty and talents might be produced with profit to both her reputation and her purse.

The detective interrupted him by shaking his head, and saying, with renewed politeness:

"I feel satisfied that Miss Shoresby could not entertain your proposition, gentlemen, her time

and means are so completely occupied at present. Still, you might present your enterprise to her in person at her hotel. Any time after ten in the morning. She never makes new acquaintances here."

Here Luella put in an appearance from her dressing-room, and, after a carelessly inquiring glance at the pretended Hebrews, straightway accepted Old Grip's escort to the outer stage-door, as it might be called, though, of course, in the strict sense of the word, there is no stage in connection with a circus and wild animal show.

Cheese-it followed secretly, the pretended Hebrews more openly, with seeming disappointment in their faces.

A storm had sprung up during the performances, and, as Luella and the detective issued from the show building, the rain was descending in torrents, and the wind blowing a hurricane.

Old Grip ran back after an umbrella, to facilitate even the passage across the broad sidewalk to the coach in waiting; and during his momentary absence the disguised men slipped past Luella and out into the night without being perceived.

A moment later, Luella, clinging to her escort's arm, and under the umbrella he had just succeeded in borrowing, skurried across the reeking sidewalk to where the hackman, his rubber coat and hat glistening in the light of the coach-lamps with the running rain-drops, stood with the coach-door open.

The next instant, and when Luella was just stepping into the vehicle, an unseen hand struck a tremendous blow across the horses' flanks from out the stormy darkness on the outer side.

They plunged forward with a terrified scream, knocking the coachman prostrate in the gutter.

Then they were off at a mad pace through the storm, with Cheese-it hanging at their heads, and Luella still only half-way in the carriage.

As for Old Grip, he had grasped the pretended Hebrews by the throat, one in either hand, and was busily pounding their heads together, as if they were made of wood.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CONFERENCE.

LUELLA, however, had the good sense to precipitate herself inside the open coach, instead of out and away from it, notwithstanding the violence of the runaway.

Then Cheese-it continued to hang on to the bits of the frenzied animals, with the tenacity of a bulldog fastened to the muzzle of an enraged bull.

The result was that the runaways came to a stop after a short career of less than a block, and were speedily under the control of the driver, who had quickly regained his feet and came halloing after them.

When he had hastily turned their heads and driven back, with the brave lad sitting by his side, the detective was still engaged knocking the heads of the pretended Hebrews together in the roaring rain, with the thunder and lightning as an heroic accompaniment.

At this instant, however, there was a flash and report from a pistol in one of the scoundrels' hands.

The detective was seen to suddenly loose his hold on that one's collar, and stagger back.

Again was the released ruffian (the more powerfully built man, and presumably Markheim) seen to level his weapon in the uncertain light.

But, quick as thought, Cheese-it, who always went armed, pulled out his revolver, and, firing from the coach-box, was beforehand in interposing a shot of his own.

It was a singularly fortunate one.

The pistol fell from the scoundrel's grasp, shattered at the stock by the boy's lucky bullet.

"Hooray!" yelled Cheese-it. "New York ag'in' Jerusalem forever!"

Simultaneously with this, the slenderer ruffian broke away from the detective's momentarily failing grip, and, dashing away, together with his companion, was speedily beyond pursuit in the gloomy bosom of the storm.

The coach drew up at the curb, and Luella looked out with a colorless face and straining eyes.

Cheese-it had already sprung from the box and was at the side of his beloved chief.

"Merciful heavens!" called out Luella; "do not tell me you are shot."

Old Grip passed his hand over his ear in a bewildered way, and then shook his head vigorously.

"I could tell you so truthfully, I am quite sure," he laughingly answered. "It must have been the wind of the scoundrel's bullet, I fancy. At all events, it felt at first as if the drum of my car had been shattered, but it is fast coming all right again."

He sprung into the carriage beside her, without another word.

Cheese-it scrambled back on the box beside the driver, and they were driven rapidly away.

"Those Jewish-looking men in the green-room!" exclaimed Luella, as soon as she could recover something of her composure.

"Yes."

"They started the runaways, and were your assailants just now?"

"Without a doubt."

"Who and what were they?"

"Markheim and Gorgo in disguise, of course."

"But what can they be up to now?"

"Ask me something a little sphinxian, I beg o. you, my dear—Luella."

"Edward!"

There was a passionate embrace, and then the detective briefly related what he knew of the fresh plot on the part of the scoundrelly pair.

"But isn't their intention perfectly incomprehensible?" exclaimed the young lady.

"Absolutely—at present."

"What is to be done?"

"Simply to wait for their visit upon you at the hotel, after which their game can be analyzed to better advantage."

"What! they will not dare after this?"

"Yes; and with profuse enough explanations and apologies. Trust them for that."

"You then suppose they imagine themselves secure in this disguise?"

"I do."

"Even after seeing you and Cheese-it seat yourselves behind them at the show?"

"Yes; they set that down to a mere coincidence. I discovered this after playing the polite and innocent dodge upon them in the green-room."

"And even after this assault upon you?"

"Even after that."

"How do you make it out?"

"You see, I collared them, and was doing all the assaulting up to the time the shot was fired. I knew you would have sense enough to throw yourself inside the carriage, or, of course, I wouldn't have wasted time with the villains. Moreover, Cheese-it had the horses by the bits, and he is a thoroughbred."

"A little hero!"

"I should say so! Well, my grabbing the pretended Jews was no proof that I had penetrated their disguise, but only of the excitement natural to the emergency. They, in their turn, will explain the attempt to murder by a disclaimer as to having had anything to do with the runaway, and a claim that they mistook me for a highwayman."

"How you can argue! Well, we shall see what we shall see, and here we are at last."

They had arrived at the hotel.

Old Reisbach was waiting in Luella's rooms for her.

He had been at the Garden, and was green with envy and anger at her having transferred his pet not-down-in-the-bills free advertisement to the benefit of the Borepaw establishment.

Miss Shoresby came very near losing her temper.

"Look here, Papa Reisbach," she exclaimed, "have your business losses quite turned your brain, or do you insist on being quite an independent fool on your own account? What and who made the Trenton free advertisement you are perpetually whining about, unless it wa Mr. Grippon and I at the risk of being torn to pieces by your tigers, through the fiendish plotting of a devil in human form—Eben Markheim—whom you continued to keep, unremanded, in your favored employ subsequently?"

She talked so vehemently as to fairly take the poor man's breath away, and all he could do was to stare at her.

"Now, do take yourself off to your own rooms, Papa Reisbach," continued Luella, a little more kindly. "Mr. Grippon and I have much to confer upon, and must not be interrupted."

"Will you give me your opinion of those Central Park lions in the morning?" Papa Reisbach asked, feebly.

"If I cannot go, Mr. Grippon will, which is all the same thing. Now, do go!"

He went.

"Polly Grimwald!" called out Luella, as, having discarded her hat and wrap, she settled into an easy-chair *vis-a-vis* to the one already taken by the detective.

"Yessum! W'atever is the hupshot of your wishes, dear Miss Luella?" responded Mrs. Grimwald, making her bustling appearance.

"Take your station in that ante-room, if you please. You can doze on the lounge in there, if you choose, but on no account allow us to be interrupted."

"Yessum, certingly, mum. But—"

"Well?"

"But if my hold man, Silas Grimwald—at present drownin' his professional misfortun's at the bar, I fear—if my hold man should come softly knockin', with a 'eavy 'eart, at the door, for a conjugal interview?"

"Then go off with him, or take him to your 'eart, my dear Polly, by all means. But do leave us to ourselves for the present."

The good-natured Cockney woman obeyed, without another word.

Then Luella lost no time in giving the details of her adventure with Markheim in the storage warehouse, this being the first opportunity she had had of doing so.

The detective, in return, told of his bowstring.

ing into No. 97, as it might be called, and what he knew of it was briefly enough related.

He had begun his examination of the papers in the old writing-desk, with his back to the open lattice-door of the compartment. Suddenly there was a whirring noise, and before he could turn the throttling cord was about his neck. Then there was another whirr, and arms and legs were hopelessly enveloped in the binding, twining thongs; and, as he partly turned, reeled and fell, Gorgio's corpse-like face was looking down upon him, distorted with triumphant malice. Then Markheim had also suddenly put in an appearance.

"He's done for, curse him!" Markheim had coolly commented. "Leave him here, and keep on the lookout hereabouts, while I attend to my young lady's case on the floor below."

That was all, until the timely arrival of Luella to the rescue.

Luella could not restrain a shudder at the recollection of that terrible ordeal.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN INTERRUPTED INTERVIEW.

"WHAT did you think on my first arrival outside the compartment cage?" asked Luella. "When you first opened your eyes, did you recognize me?"

"Yes."

"And what did you think?"
"That I was saved."

"But you were already at death's door—black in the face—and the cruel, immovable bar separated us."

"Nevertheless, I was confident that you would devise the means of saving me."

"And yet I had been so stupid as to forget the electric button, which would have simplified everything."

"No matter, I knew that you would save me."

"Why did you know it?"
"Because for the first time I unmistakably saw your love for me in your sweet face."

He had taken her hand.

"Don't, Edward!" with a struggling voice, half of pain, but not wholly withdrawing the imprisoned hand.

"You love me, though, Luella?"

"I do, I do! but my father's murder is still unavenged. I dare not think of love until then."

"True, I had forgotten that for the moment. It shall be avenged, never fear. But after that?"

"Ah, do not tempt me, too, to forget. Can't you guess?"

"Perhaps so, but I would hear it from your own lips. After that, then?"

"I am yours."

"My darling, my life, my love!"

For a single instant he strained her to his breast, devouring her lips with his passionate kisses.

Then they were as before.

"I shall not offend this way again," he said, resolutely.

"You did not offend," she murmured.

"You only—erred. For the present, we must counterplot and counterplan, not love—that is, not too demonstratively."

Old Grip laughed.

"To the subject in hand, then."

"That is well."

"That duplicate document No. 57, of which Markheim deprived you?"

"Well?"

"Had you had no opportunity to glance at its contents?"

"Not the slightest. He was upon me unawares just as I was about to unfold it."

"The other document that he flaunted before your eyes, while parleying with you?"

"Ah, the one professed to have been taken from the envelope at the bottom of the strongbox?"

"Yes."

"Well, it was brief, and, as well as I could judge in the swift perusal he accorded me, its purport was what he claimed for it."

"Duly attested."

"Seemingly so."

"And devising one-half of the estate to Markheim?"

"Yes."

"In your father's peculiar handwriting?"

"Either that, or an excellent imitation of it, I had no time to be sure of which."

"What is your impression?"

"The same as yours expressed to me shortly before that, when you had discovered the secret bottom to the chest, and we were contemplating the torn yellow envelope together."

"Ah! that the scoundrel had met with a bitter disappointment in its contents?"

"Yes."

"Then what do you suppose of the document he displayed to you?"

"Doubtless a clever forgery of his own, with which he had come as prepared against that very disappointment he must have recognized the possibility of."

The detective slapped his thigh.

"Just my impression exactly," he exclaimed, "And the scoundrel was jealously suspicious of that duplicate you had just discovered?"

"Inordinately so."

"Did he know that you had not yet had time to read it, do you imagine?"

"He must have guessed as much from my manner. Had I really read the duplicate, to the effect of exposing his plot, of course I would have charged him with the forgery at once. He must have argued that out on the instant."

"Ah! and doubtless his chief alarm was lest you should read it."

"Did he seem satisfied after depriving you of the document?"

"Yes; and more than satisfied."

"How?"

"Exultant, you know."

"Ah!"

"I had exasperated him into a white heat of rage. When he first grasped me in his powerful and frenzied arms I anticipated insult; but after taking the duplicate paper from my pocket, he at once released me."

The detective gritted his teeth.

"A moment later," continued Luella, "I was a prisoner in the compartment, Markheim was gone, leaving me his parting taunt, and I was half-beside myself with the knowledge of your situation in the next compartment overhead."

The detective reflected.

"It is hard," he said, after a pause, "it is desperately trying to have to hold off and give this scoundrel and his follower more rope; but I do not see how we can otherwise hang them in the end."

"Neither do I," observed Luella. "We can only be cool and patient. We can only meet their plots with counterplots until we have them fairly in the toils, with my poor father's murderer proved upon their accursed heads."

"Yes; it is the only way."

"And if they should visit me in their Jewish disguise?"

"Oh, they'll do that, never doubt it. And then we may hope for fresh developments. But you must manage to have me present when they come."

"Why, of course; I wouldn't receive them here, even in broad daylight, unless you were with me."

It was lucky that the interview was about at an end, for at this juncture they were interrupted voices by in the ante-room.

"Oh, I'm all right, Polly!" exclaimed a boisterously-hilarious voice. "Aven't you a kiss for your hown lovey-dovey, my hangel?"

"Hush, hush!" Mrs. Grimwald's voice was heard to reply, soothingly. "Miss Luella is a talkin' of business haffairs with Mr. Grippon, 'er hagent, an' mustn't on no account be interrupted, Silas, dear."

"'Ow's that, my beauty?"

Polly was heard to repeat her injunction, and then her husband burst into a jubilant "Ip, ip, 'urrah," as he would doubtless have called it, and they heard him dancing a jig.

"Musht shee 'em, Polly, I musht, I tell you!" he roared. "Hold friends of mine, both of 'em! Musht pay my respects, you know, sweet-eart!"

And then, followed by the humiliated Polly with uplifted hands, the genial ex-circus-clown came prancing into the room where Luella and Old Grip were, and straightway began making himself promiscuously ridiculous, as only a drunken good-natured man can do.

"Get him to bed in your own room, Polly, do!" urged Luella.

"I can't, ma'm, unless I stay up hall night myself," replied Mrs. Grimwald, with refreshing candor. "The bed isn't big enough by 'alf."

"Then go off with him to his room. At all events, get rid of him somehow. That's a good woman."

This was accordingly done, and Mrs. Grimwald carried her obstreperous better-half away from the apartments, to the great relief of their young mistress.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HOTEL AREA.

"THIS is not altogether well," observed the detective, rising to take his leave. "You should have kept Polly with you."

"Why?" asked Luella.

"She was your sole companion here in this suite."

Luella laughed gayly.

"Oh, I am brave, you know," she cried, "and the fastenings on these doors are excellent. Good-night!"

Nevertheless, Old Grip felt anxious about Luella being thus left alone in her apartments, and, after retiring to his own room, which was directly overhead—Cheese it occupying a smaller communicating room—he could not sleep for thinking of it.

He accordingly merely threw off his coat and waistcoat, took a glance at the soundly-sleeping boy, and then, turning down the gas, took a seat at the open window in an easy-chair, with a freshly-lighted cigar.

The rain continued, though the fierce wind had subsided, and the air was uncommonly

sultry for the season, making the position at the window more comfortable than the bed would have been for a sleepless man.

The room looked from the third story down into the inclosed hotel court, or area, and was, as near as the occupant could judge, directly over the room of Miss Shoresby's suite occupied by her as a bed-chamber.

Mindful of the mysterious intrusion into his own apartment of the night before, together with the Malay creese episode, Old Grip was careful not to fall asleep in his exposed situation.

He could not, however, help falling presently into a dreamful reverie, in which, as was but natural, his fortunate possession of the beautiful Luella's heart was the chief and most enchanting reflection.

He could scarcely realize this good fortune of his.

It was the one ruling, if not the first, master-passion of his long life of almost constant danger and adventure; for almost from his earliest boyhood he had been the shuttlecock of destiny in many lands, and for many years a professional detective—a discoverer of crime, a hunter of evil men, the human wolves of either sex, for that matter, to their final lairs; which, it is hardly necessary to say, had been their last on earth—the condemned murderer's prison-cell.

And now she loved him, this peerless, this radiantly beautiful creature, and would, God willing, one day be his blushing bride, his faithful wife, her noble heart's love, the haven of rest, the golden reward of his many wanderings, his ceaseless struggles, his hard, wearying, and often thankless fight with criminal humanity, in the interest of law and order!

A pleasing outlook, truly!

It assumed a thousand agreeable outlooks in his wool-gathering mind.

Heedless, he heard the hours of the night strack off from a neighboring church-tower, with but vague consciousness of their significance amid his delicious musings.

Meanwhile the rain continued to fall ceaselessly, heavily, and the blackness of darkness to apparently thicken into tangibility in the great hollow quadrangle of the hotel buildings.

Suddenly, just as he had become conscious of three in the morning having been tolled out, he saw the galvanized iron leader, running down the wall close at the outer side of the casement, shake.

Instantly he was awake, active, alert, revolver in hand.

Some one, or something, was in all probability stealthily scaling the spout from the bottom of the court.

Reaching over to the gas-jet, which still presented a slightly glimmering light, a mere speck of bluish flame, he wholly extinguished it, and then resumed his vigil with a stern smile on his face.

"Will the man-cat try the creese act upon me again?" he thought. "I sincerely hope so. This time he shall not find me unprepared."

Old Grip possessed the extraordinary faculty that is legendary to have been attained by Edmond Dantes, the hero of Monte Cristo, through the long familiarization of the latter's eyes with the unrelieved gloom of his rock-hewn dungeon.

He was able to see in the dark.

That is, there was seldom a darkness so solid or so black but that he could distinguish with exceptional precision the outlines of objects there-in that would have been absolutely invisible to ordinary eyes.

He noted that the spout only jarred slightly at brief intervals, thus indicating that the person scaling it was either exercising extreme caution, or, which was more probable, that he found the task so difficult as to render a pause for rest necessary with almost every foot of the ascent attained.

The detective presently arose, stealthily leaned out of the window, and peered down along the leader into the rainy darkness of the area.

He had not mistaken.

Fastened, cat-like, to the spout, midway up between the first and second stories, and about twenty-five feet from the wet stone flagging of the court, he distinguished the outlines of a human figure.

Even as he gazed, the latter writhed its way a little higher up, and then paused to rest again.

Old Grip debated with himself, but only for an instant.

Should he pick the prowler off with a bullet then and there?

No; he could not resist the temptation of a surprise—of unexpectedly confronting Gorgo face to face, when the latter should come wriggling his serpentine way into the chamber, probably with a fresh creese between his teeth—and then of effecting his capture alive at the revolver's muzzle.

This villain, no less than Markheim, must be reserved for the hangman's offices.

Accordingly he resumed his seat, and waited again.

Presently it occurred to the detective that he was being kept waiting over-long.

Then he remarked that, with a final jar, the leader had altogether ceased affording indications of the scaler's continued ascent.

Then a horrible reflection suddenly burst upon him.

What if Luella's bedchamber, instead of his own, had been the clamber-scoundrel's objective point?

Inwardly anathematizing his own obtuseness, the next instant he was leaning far out over the hollowness of the court, revolver cocked.

"Too late!"

The prowler's heels were just disappearing, like the tail of a serpent, in at Miss Shoresby's chamber window.

Not too late to do the next best thing, however.

Crack! crack! went the detective's revolver, the reports hardly audible above the rushing of the rain.

But the first unerring bullet knocked away the fastening of the leader directly on a line with Miss Shoresby's window-ledge.

The second sent the leader itself, from that point down, tumbling into the depths of the area, thus cutting off the intruder's escape by that means.

"Cheese-it! Up and follow me, armed!"

This with the gas freshly lighted, and the detective at the door of the boy's room.

Cheese-it's profoundest slumber was accustomed to that sharp, commanding voice.

He was up in an instant, springing into his garments with a rapidity that would have done credit to the cleverest member of the New York Fire Department, or to a Jack-tar, with "All hands on deck!" ringing in his ears, and threatened shipwreck in his thoughts.

Then Old Grip was down-stairs, knocking peremptorily at the door of Luella's suite.

"Who is it?" called out the young woman, in her clear, brave voice.

Heaven be praised! she was not murdered yet.

"It is I, Old Grip!" he answered. "I must enter, and search your rooms this instant. Delay not; there is imminent danger!"

A satisfactory response was returned, and he could hear her leap out of bed with a bound.

Here Cheese-it made his appearance in the dimly-lighted passage, revolver in hand.

"This is your post!" instructed the detective. "Shoot without mercy any one trying to escape by this door or that one."

And he indicated a second door communicating with the suite.

Then Luella, having turned on the gas within, quickly opened the door, revealing herself in a long morning-gown, belted at the waist, thus completely concealing the faintest suggestion of her rudely-awakened slumbers.

Old Grip unceremoniously strode into the room, explaining in a dozen words what he had witnessed.

"The scoundrel must be concealed somewhere in here now," he finished by saying. "I must search every nook and cranny. If you feel equal to it, you may light up the rooms for me while I set to work."

She acquiesced without a word, having but slightly paled at the intimation of the peril she had doubtless so narrowly escaped.

The search went on with the rapidity and thoroughness that could only be expected of a detective-expert, to whom the slightest displacement of a chair, or even a book, was not without its analytical significance.

There were five apartments in the suite.

At last every one of them had been inspected, turned inside out, as you might say—wholly without result—with the single exception of the lady's bedroom.

For the first time during this ordeal, Luella's sense of maiden modesty overcame her.

She sprang before the detective, as he was about to enter, with face flaming.

"You must not!" she faltered, chokingly. "I cannot let you! It is not right!"

He took her in his arms, gravely kissed her, as he might have done had she been his sister, and then gently put her to one side.

"You mistake," he said, "I must enter."

"But—"

"Gorgo, your would-have-been assassin, is doubtless concealed in this room and nowhere else. He cannot have escaped. I have cut off his line of retreat by the water-spout; Cheese-it holds the passage. I understand your feelings, your sensibilities, but—I must search the chamber."

"Wait, then!"

She dashed into the room before him—it was already lighted dimly—and drew the bed-curtains together.

Then the detective followed her, turned up the gas to a full head, and began his systematic search of the interior.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FRESH COMPLICATIONS.

THE prowler was not to be found.

The detective scratched his head and looked bewildered.

"I was looking directly down from my window," he said. "I'll swear I saw him disappearing into this one."

"Perhaps he slipped out by the way he came."

"But I had shot away the pipe by which he ascended from the court."

"It is very dark out yonder," and she glanced suggestively out of the still open casement.

"But I can see in the dark."

"Still, my dear friend, I cannot help thinking that you must have been mistaken."

Here a puff of wind waved apart the bed-curtains, which her maidenly modesty had caused her to close so jealously in the dim light, as a preliminary to his entrance.

A glittering object amid the draperies caught the detective's attention.

He sprung forward, and, in spite of her interposition, tore the curtains back.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "Now can you say that I was mistaken?"

The color forsook Luella Shoresby's face.

There, plunged to the hilt in the couch, and directly alongside the light impression that her sleeping form had made in the yielding mattress, was a dagger, driven to the hilt.

"Merciful Heaven!" she murmured; "what have I escaped!"

The detective drew out the weapon, and examined it.

"This Gorgo must have a stock in trade of Malay creeses," was his grim comment. "Mark the curved handle, the undulating blade. It is a fac-simile of the one I found sticking in my couch—perhaps the same weapon that he subsequently threatened you with in the storage warehouse."

Luella was almost overcome for the moment, but she glanced suggestively at the open window, as being the sole means of the scoundrel's escape after the alarm had been raised.

They both sprang to it, and looked down into the area, which was not so densely dark as before.

Escape down there could not have been effected without hazarding a bone-smashing leap.

The leader had fallen clean away from the wall below the window-ledge, and there was nothing else by which hand or foothold could have been obtained by a monkey.

Suddenly it occurred to Luella to look up, instead of down.

As she did so, she gave an exclamation of astonishment and panic.

The water-pipe was intact above, if demolished below; and the prowler had not been prevented from escaping along the wall in the direction of the down-pouring heavens.

As the detective looked up the Javanese was just disappearing over the window-ledge into his, Old Grip's, own room.

The detective bounded away, and out of the suite, as if impelled by springs, Luella following him so far as the passage-door.

"Quick, Cheese-it! he is in my room. We'll have him trapped!"

Then together they rushed up the near-at-hand staircase, three or four steps at a time. Too late again!

Gorgo sprung out of the room in a flash, dodged between man and boy like an eel, and then came whirling down the staircase like a wheel, in three or four tremendous back-somersets or hand-springs, it was difficult to tell which.

They durst not fire after him from fear of injury to Luella, standing half-paralyzed with astonishment at the door of her apartments.

As Gorgo whirled past her he touched her with his hand.

But that was all, and then he was gone down the remaining flights with a velocity that fairly mocked the idea of a pursuit.

Luckily, all these happenings had taken place without disturbing any other of the hotel inmates, chiefly owing, perhaps, to its being a comparatively secluded wing of the main building.

"He struck at you!" exclaimed the detective, coming down again to Luella. "Are you hurt?"

"No; and you are mistaken," replied the young woman, bravely rallying her faculties out of their panic. "He merely touched me with his hand, for what reason I cannot conceive, though the touch was accompanied by a strange tug at my robe."

But when they had followed her into the lighted rooms Cheese-it exclaimed:

"I see what it meant, ma'am! What is that sticking against your skirt?"

They looked.

It was a slip of paper pinned there.

It bore these words, scrawled across it in red ink:

"Dismiss your agent detective, if you would escape my constant, deadly pursuit. If not, you will escape it never until the bribe of Death or

"MARKHEIM."

Luella dropped despairingly into a chair, pallid and trembling.

The repeated strains upon her nerves were at last beyond even her courageous endurance.

"Cheese-it," said Old Grip, "find out Silas Grimwold's room and bring his wife here without delay. Miss Shoresby must not be left alone again."

Then, as the boy vanished on his errand, he gravely took a seat by Luella and held her hand in silence until Polly made her appearance.

"Have her watch while you finish your night's rest," was the detective's whispered injunction at parting. "Don't forget this."

She nodded her acquiescence, with a faint smile, and the eventful night's adventures were at last ended.

The detective was careful to take his own rest with Cheese-it on guard at the window of his room, revolver in hand.

Rising late the next morning (Sunday), as was but natural, Old Grip made one meal of luncheon and breakfast.

Then, learning that Miss Shoresby desired to remain in retirement, he left a note for her as to his intentions with Cheese-it, and, yielding to the solicitations of Reisbach, went away with the latter to pass his opinion on the brace of lions in the Central Park collection.

It was still disagreeable, threatening weather, though without any more downfall, and comparatively few visitors were at the Park.

Reisbach's lions were found to be in fair condition.

Old Grip told him what he ought to get for them of Steiche & Co., or of any other dealers.

Then, as he thought that Luella would wish to remain in seclusion for the remainder of the day, he accepted Reisbach's invitation to a dinner at Mount St. Vincent's Hotel, in the heart of the Park.

There they met Grimwold and other professional acquaintances (the former well over his previous night's indulgence, but too "seedy" to be so amusing as his wont) and the stay was prolonged beyond the original intention.

It was nearly dark when the detective started to drive home with Mr. Reisbach in the smart turnout the latter had hired for the occasion.

Coming out of the Fifth avenue entrance, they perceived a spry-looking lad on the bordering path, seemingly scanning the occupants of every vehicle that passed (there were not many on that disagreeable day) with exceptional inquisitiveness.

The spry-looking lad wore a mouse-colored suit, which was unmistakable even at a considerable distance.

Needless to add that it was our young friend, Cheese-it.

"What can he be after me for?" commented the detective, half to himself. "Pull up, Reisbach. Something may be wrong."

Reisbach did so, and the boy came running eagerly across the roadway to them.

"Did you send a note to Miss Shoresby an hour ago, sir?" he asked of Reisbach, touching his hat.

"Note? Of course not!"

"Here's the one she received, sir."

Both Reisbach and the detective read the note handed up to them by the boy.

It was in a very clever imitation of the ex-show proprietor's handwriting, and was to the following effect:

"MISS SHORESBY:—Do come up to Park. Gripon and I will be expecting you at Mt. St. Vincent's Hotel. Close carriage will be in waiting for you at Fifth avenue entrance. Coachman with white band on hat. Mention our names. Gripon thinks the outing will do you good.

J. REISBACH."

"Of course it's a forgery!" exclaimed Reisbach. "Did Miss Shoresby take any stock in this sham invitation, my boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is she now?"

"On her way here, I reckon."

"And you?"

"I'm here before her, after cabbaging the note. Look! there is the coachman with the white hat-band now."

They looked in the direction indicated, and then the boy cried out again, in a puzzled tone:

"And look there on the opposite side of the drive! Bless me if there isn't another one!"

It was true. There were two close coaches, drawn up on opposite sides of the broad drive, each of whose liveried coachmen sported a tall black glazed hat, with a white leather band.

"There's some deep trick here," remarked Old Grip. "Drive up under yonder tree, Reisbach, and let us observe which of the coaches catches Miss Shoresby in its trap."

No sooner was this done, Cheese-it following, than a superbly-formed vailed lady, tastefully dressed and closely vailed, stepped quickly across the esplanade toward one of the coaches in waiting, with the air of having just arrived from down-town by the Elevated Railway, or some equally public conveyance.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TRICKED.

THE vailed lady approached the coach furthest away from the watchful observers under the tree, and was seen to address the driver.

He was observed to reply earnestly, and then to spring from his seat and admit her into the vehicle with every appearance of ceremonious obsequiousness.

"Be quick, Reisbach!" exclaimed the detective; "after it! It is doubtless a trick of Markheim's to get Miss Shoresby in his power."

The coachman had sprung back to his seat on the box with guilty-like agility, and was already driving up into the Park with rapidity.

But Reisbach's livery-stable nag was a good one.

In less than a minute, and before the entrance-esplanade was out of sight behind, the buggy with its two occupants, Cheese-it running after it like a deer, was whirled up alongside.

"Stop!" cried the detective, authoritatively, while the indomitable Cheese-it unceremoniously seized the coach-horses by the head. "Stop, or you'll repent it!" And he was out of the buggy in an instant.

"What's the matter with you?" roared the coachman, pulling up with an oath.

"You are tricking the young lady who is your passenger, that is what's the matter!" interposed Reisbach from the buggy.

"You're a liar!" and the coachman flourished his whip menacingly, but was quieted by a stern look from the detective, together with a suggestive hip-pocket movement. "All right, then, gents; but this is a bloody outrage you'll be called on to answer for."

Old Grip was already at the coach-door, out of whose window the veiled inmate had cast a seemingly frightened glance or two, but, oddly enough, back toward the esplanade, instead of toward her would-be rescuers, and the commotion they were causing.

"Step out, Luella!" cried the detective, wrenching open the door. "Thank Heaven, we are in time! but how could you be deceived by that pretended note from Reisbach—a stale trick at the best?"

To his astonishment, the veiled passenger only shrunk further back, seeming to regard him with bewilderment and dismay.

At this instant there was a protesting cry from the Park entrance—a cry in Luella's own voice.

The tricked rescuers looked back.

To their dismay, they saw Miss Shoresby (wearing no veil whatever) being forced by two men into the second coach they had left behind and all but forgotten.

The second coachman of the white hat-band was assisting, and the real abduction of Luella was almost a *fait accompli*.

"Who are you?" thundered the amazed detective to the veiled coach-passenger.

The latter, instead of shrinking back, as at first, burst into a silvery laugh.

"Why, surely you ought to know me by this time, Mr. Gripon!" she replied; "though you have yet to explain to me why you have seen fit to interfere with my evening drive in this unwarrantable manner."

With that, she coolly raised her veil, disclosing the features of—Madame Lesteur.

Though seldom in the habit of swearing, the detective staggered back with an oath, and the single word, "Tricked!" while La Lesteur burst into another of her silvery laughs.

"Why, what can you mean, Monsieur Gripon?" she cried, mockingly. "You were just saying to my coachman that it was I who was being tricked."

The coachman was looking down from his box, contentedly enough now, and with a broad grin on his coarse face.

"You'll repent this, both of you!" growled the detective, springing back into the buggy beside the no less amazed and chagrined Reisbach. "Quick, Reisbach! we may yet be in time. Come along, Cheese-it!"

There was a parting laugh from La Lesteur and a gruff haw-haw from her coachman as the trio of deceived rescuers dashed away.

Reisbach had lost no time in making the turn, but Luella had already been forced into the other coach, and it was being driven furiously away up into the darkening Park by a diverse driveway by the time the pursuit was well under way.

But Reisbach's horse, as has been said, was a stepper, and he did not spare the whip, while Cheese-it, unable to keep up on foot, had fastened on some way behind the spinning buggy.

"We'll overtake 'em—it's only a question of minutes," observed Reisbach, who was an excellent whip. "That is, if an arrest for fast driving doesn't interpose."

But this was just the interposition that did occur.

When the chase was at its climax, and while a man was anxiously looking back out of the window of the fugitive coach, a couple of mounted policemen came thundering along the drive in pursuit of the buggy.

"Let up, there, blast you!" roared one, as the pair came rushing along on either side. "Do you take this here drive for a race-track?"

Old Grip stood up and tried to explain the situation without stopping the horse, but he could not or would not be heard.

Reisbach was compelled to rein up.

"Look at that coach yonder!" shouted Old Grip, indignantly pointing away. "An abducted young lady's in it, we're trying to rescue her, and I'm the detective, Ned Gripon, otherwise Old Grip! Now do you understand?"

"Oh!" and the mounted officers were both amazed and abashed. "Well, go ahead, Mr. Gripon, and we'll help you."

Again the pursuit was taken up, the mounted men leading it with commendable zeal; but the coach had had its opportunity by reason of the

interruption, and was by this time vanished around a turn in the drive.

When they did come in sight of it again it was jogging along leisurely and unconcernedly enough, the coachman even being engaged in lighting a cigar.

He was much such a gruff, dry customer as his counterpart of the white band who had first been dealt.

"What's up?" he coolly asked, pulling up gracefully as his pursuers came thundering alongside. "Is it a highway-robbery, gents, or another anarchist plot?"

"Empty!" cried one of the policemen, leaning out of his saddle to peer into the coach. "Where's your recent passenger?" he demanded, sternly.

"Is it the lady you mean, or the two gents what was with her?" asked the coachman, biting off the end of his cigar, and evidently intent upon wasting valuable time.

"The lady!" interposed Old Grip, with a metallic intonation of suppressed fury in his voice that caused the coachman to look up with a start. "Where is she? Where did those men take her?"

"Oh, that's what you want to know, is it?" "Trifle another instant, and I'll break your neck."

"They got out at the last cross-path back yonder," sullenly; "perhaps to take a *passer*, and perhaps not. Leastwise, the young lady looked sort of sick-like."

"Officers, take charge of this man as assisting at an abduction!" cried Old Grip. "My present address is the — Hotel, and I will formulate the charge."

"All right, Cap!" replied one of the officers, cheerfully. "Coachee, turn your plugs' heads to other way. You're wanted at the station-house."

Reisbach had already turned, and was driving rapidly back.

He pulled up at the first path crossing the road, and the detective, springing out, was joined by Cheese-it.

The path passed east and west of the drive; and there was no use questioning the arrested coachman as to the direction to be followed, as it was ten to one that he would lie in his answer.

The detective directed Cheese-it to go east, while he went off in the opposite direction, the signal for success in either case to be a pistol-shot.

Reisbach, as a matter of course, remained in charge of the buggy.

Night had almost completely fallen, and the paths were umbreous.

Old Grip had purposely chosen the path leading to the western boundary of the Park, from remembering that a small circus, in which Markheim might have been interested, had recently had its winter-quarters in that neighborhood.

As he hurried along he presently heard voices, seemingly just beyond the Park wall, and then there was a woman's cry.

Luella's voice! "Coming!" he shouted; and, firing his pistol in the air, he dashed forward.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LUELLA'S RESCUE.

THERE was no opening in the wall at the end of the path, but only a sort of stile consisting of four or five crazy wooden steps.

The detective bounded to the top of the wall like a whirlwind.

By the dim light the situation was made apparent to him at a glance.

Almost directly under the wall was Luella, apparently ill or dazed, and Markheim, assisted by Gorgo, was endeavoring to persuade or bully her into crossing the Eighth avenue roadway, on the opposite side of which a number of rough-looking men (who might be show tent-men out of employment—a dangerous and turbulent class of men even at their best) were grouped, as if in waiting, around a close coach and pair.

As Old Grip dashed unhesitatingly down from the wall to Luella's immediate rescue, a bullet from either Markheim or Gorgo whistled by his ear, and the contingent ruffians came rushing across the roadway to the immediate abductors' assistance.

As Markheim and Gorgo backed up against the wall with their prisoner, the detective snapped his revolver at the foremost of the newcomers—a stalwart scoundrel, with brandished fists that looked like a pair of boiled hams on the ends of steam piston-rods.

For the first time in its history, the weapon missed fire.

Dashing the giant prostrate by hurling the treacherous barker in his face, the unequalled fisticuffs of the Showman Detective were brought into requisition with telling effect.

Two other stranger ruffians bit the dust in such rapid succession as to seem struck by lightning, while their half-dozer or more companions shrunk momentarily back.

Then the detective wheeled upon Luella's immediate captors in a flash.

He was just in time to avoid a dagger-stroke

from Gorgo, while a second bullet from Markheim's leveled revolver pierced the sleeve of his left arm, grazing the flesh.

Luella had been left standing against the wall, still apparently too dazed or stupefied to help herself.

Then somehow, he never remembered in what manner, both Markheim and Gorgo went down, dashed to the ground by the lightning-like, sledge-hammer blows of the detective, and the latter found himself facing the fearful odds presented by his foes (for the prostrated men had lost no time in struggling to their feet again) with Luella cowering mutely and helplessly behind him.

But Markheim had lost his pistol, and, luckily, there did not seem to be another firearm in the crowd; while the ruffian assaultants seemed to be too excited to think of snatching up stones, or of using anything but their fists;—with the single exception of Gorgo, who was hanging momentarily on the outskirts of the advancing mob, crease in hand, his cadaverous face illuminated with a greenish, sickly glow, his fang-like teeth showing between his thin, shrinking lips, like some nondescript wild beast, licking his chops before rushing with his mates anew into a fresh revel of devastating slaughter and cruelty.

But the detective's iron coolness had returned to him, as the natural supplement of his invincible courage and address.

Up went his indomitable fists, playing out first on this side, then on that, like the scarcely distinguishable spokes of a swiftly-revolving fly-wheel, as he caught and parried the blows rained at him, apparently with no more exertion than a lion's in brushing off the swarming flies with his lashing tail.

But it was not in human bravery and skill, however exceptional, that this baffling of such enormous odds could long endure.

Gorgo furnished the needed diversion, though with such ultimate results as he could have no conception of.

"Way there!" he yelled, in his shrill, screaming voice. "It is the devil-detective, Old Grip himself, and the knife alone can settle him!"

The detective's fisticuff assaultants, without desisting in their own hostilities, swayed back right and left, thus making a narrow lane between their turbulent ranks.

There was an exultant, hissing sound, like the battle-challenge of a charging snake, and Gorgo flashed through it with the velocity of a cast lance, straight at the hard-pressed detective's heart, the brandished crease glittering in his desperate hand like a splinter of sunshine suddenly hurled from out the darkness of the in-gathering night.

Luella uttered a shriek.

But her solicitude was wholly unnecessary.

The detective's spoke-like pugilism did not cease for an instant, though there was likewise a sudden outflash of the right foot.

Then the Javanese thug's exceptional onset was a thing of the past, his crease was a lost flash in the dominion of Nowhere, and he was gasping at his length, like a speared salmon, on the roadway back of the mob, from such a kick under the chin as would have half-decapitated any one of nineteen ordinary men out of twenty.

Old Grip was by this time almost completely exhausted, and he was wondering over and over again why Cheese-it did not put in an appearance, but his deliverance was at hand.

"Who shouted 'Old Grip?'" suddenly roared out a stentorian voice from across the road, just as the ruffians were once again closing in on the devoted detective with redoubled energy and malevolence.

The latter instantly recognized it as that of Tom Vincent, sub-animal-keeper, and his old-time well-wisher of the Shoresby-Reisbach Combination.

"Here, and hard-pressed!" he shouted. "Come on, Tom!"

Vincent was a slugger from Sluggerville in defense of a friend.

His burly figure came plunging across the roadway, and the next instant he was setting up a vigorous and effective attack upon the enemy's rear.

Simultaneously with this diversion, Cheese-it appeared on top of the wall, and, not being able to distinguish the contending parties very plainly, began to empty his revolver in the air.

And, as he sprung down from the wall, he was followed by one of the two policemen left behind (though dismounted now for this special service), locust in hand.

The scoundrels suddenly scattered and disappeared, like chaff before the wind.

Almost in a breath, they had vanished, even the prostrate Gorgo having mysteriously disappeared.

"I recognize that gang, blast 'em!" cried Tom Vincent. "The ruck of 'em were discharged from the show that broke up winter-quarters last month over yonder in the open lots. It was lucky that I chanced to be looking up an old chum of mine among 'em to-night, or I wouldn't have had this chance to sail in on your side, Old Grip. Thank the Lord, I was on time!"

The detective, who was now supporting Luella

on his arm, thanked him with a look, and then gazed a little chidingly at Cheese-it.

His displeasure vanished, however, upon perceiving that the boy's face was bruised and battered.

"He's a little trump, and he did his best, sir," explained the policeman, taking in the situation. "He was waylaid in his turn on the east path, and would have been murdered if I hadn't gone to his rescue."

Old Grip nodded, and then, making a sign, he placed Luella temporarily under the officer's protection, and dashed across the street toward the coach, whose driver, who seemed to be just recovering from a species of stupefaction over the result of the fight, was about gathering up his lines preparatory to whipping up.

The detective bounded up beside him on the box, seized the reins out of his hands, and guided the horses back across the street, under a street lamp, around which his friends were now grouped.

Then, suddenly grasping the driver by the throat, he turned his partly muffled face to the light.

"I expected something of the sort," he muttered. "Come up here, Cheese-it!" he then called out. "It's Sorab Drubblejah."

As the detective descended, the faithful lad took his place beside the driver on the box, with whispered orders to shoot the latter without pity at the first sign of treachery or intractability on his part.

Then, after asking the policeman to inform Mr. Reisbach of the *denouement* of the affair, and bidding Tom Vincent good-evening, with a cordial invitation to call at the hotel, the detective helped Luella into the coach, got in after her, and the order was, "Home!"

No sooner had they started than Luella, who had seemed gradually struggling out of her stupefaction, fell upon her companion's breast in an agony of weeping.

"Forgive me for having been tricked by such a shallow pretense!" she sobbed. "But I did so want to see you, and—and they must have drugged me in some mysterious way subsequently; for a handkerchief was pressed over my face, and then—and then—"

"Hush, hush!" he soothed. "Could I blame you, or any one, for surrendering to the artifices of those plotting fiends?"

After the arrival at the hotel Cheese-it asked if Sorab Drubblejah was to be handed over to the police.

"No!" was the detective's prompt reply. "Such a tool can be found when wanted; and as for Markheim and Gorgo, I shall fight it out with them single-handed, or go under in the battle."

CHAPTER XXX.

MR. MOSES AND MR. SOLOMONS.

NEARLY a fortnight had passed away without any further demonstration on the part of the common enemy, and another Saturday had come around.

On the detective's going to Miss Shoresby's suite of rooms that morning to inquire into her wishes respecting a certain business transaction with which he was intrusted, he found both Mr. Borepaw and Mr. Reisbach just taking their departure, apparently after a not very satisfactory interview with that energetic young lady.

At all events, the gentlemen were looking depressed, to say the least, and there was in Luella's either cheek the bright spot of color indicative of her having given way to her angry indignation.

"What has been the matter?" asked Old Grip.

"A great deal has been the matter!" exclaimed the young lady, giving him her hand according to her custom, as they seated themselves alone in her little parlor. "The impudence of some men!"

"But what is it just now?"

"You know what I have done for my whilom show-associates?"

"I should say I did. Well, you have secured engagements at Madison Square Garden for Madame Reisbach and Olga, together with even the two Drubblejahs, to begin with—and that, notwithstanding Sorab's particularly lame explanation as to his having been misled into the Central Park affair, as he characterized it."

"Add that I even got work for La Lesteur."

"So you did; and her self-exculpation was even lamer than Sorab's."

"All this; and at whose express solicitation?"

"Mr. Reisbach's."

"Now for Mr. Reisbach himself?"

"Borepaw and you have made him chief ringmaster, at a tip-top salary."

"Anything else and more?"

"Not that I can think of. True, Grimwald and Vincent have been given profitable employment, too, but that was on their merits, and out of personal considerations."

"Yes; well, haven't I obliged Reisbach pretty extensively in all this?"

"I should say so! A good deal more so than you would have done had you heeded my advice."

"I wish I had heeded it; you must forgive me, dear friend, that my impulsive commiseration for old professionals in distress prevented

me doing so. You are always right, and I am always wrong."

"Drop that, please, my dear—Miss Shoresby. Well, then?"

"Well, what more do you suppose that man, Papa Reisbach, proposes that I should consent to, at his special request? And he has persuaded my partner, Mr. Borepaw, to back him up in it, too."

"Humph!"

"What is it, do you suppose?"

"Let me cogitate. Is it *very* preposterous?"

"The hight of absurdity?"

"Let me see. I think I can make a good guess as to Papa Reisbach's fresh demand upon your complacency."

"What is it?"

"The employment of Markheim and Gorgo themselves! There is no other stupendous absurdity for him to request."

"The very thing, and with Chimborazo thrown in—Minotaur, as you know, we had purchased previously."

Luella clapped her hands, and then, as if having exhausted the indignant side of the subject, she threw herself back in her chair and laughed—a little hysterically, perhaps, but until the tears rolled down her cheeks.

Old Grip contemplated her derisive merriment with a smile at first, but then with growing thoughtfulness.

"To think of it!" she cried, gradually regaining something of her composure. "And Papa Reisbach actually tries to make me believe that neither Markheim nor Gorgo, but only some fellows resembling them, have been engaged in those repeatedly murderous attempts against you and me; in other words, that, if not actual saints in the show business, they are not nearly so black as our *fancies* have painted them. Think of that, my friend!"

"I am thinking of it," replied the detective, seriously. "In fact, it is worthy of the deepest consideration."

"But that is not all!" cried Luella. "Who do you think it is pretended the agents are in this matter—the agents who have been especially influencing both Borepaw and Reisbach to make this ridiculous appeal to me on the part of these precious worthies, this virtuous pair?"

"I am sure I can't say."

"Mr. Moses and Mr. Solomons!"

Before Old Grip could reply, Mr. Reisbach came back after his walking-stick, which he had forgotten.

"I say, Mr. Reisbach!" called out the detective, genially.

"What is it, Mr. Gripon?"

And Reisbach came to a pause, while studiously abstaining from looking at Luella, with whom he chose to be profoundly and painfully offended for the time being.

"I am going to take the liberty of asking you a plain question."

"But what is it, my dear sir?"

"What secret power is it that Eben Markheim has over you?"

Mr. Reisbach flushed.

"You don't mean to insult me, Gripon, do you?"

"I do not, but only to obtain a plain answer, in the interest of Miss Shoresby and—the public at large."

"The public at large?"

"Exactly. When you make yourself a persistent champion of a proved criminal scoundrel, such as Eben Markheim—to say nothing of his attendant ghoul and thug, the wretch Gorgo—the general public, no less than Miss Shoresby and myself, will demand an explanation of your extraordinary conduct."

Reisbach had gone on getting redder and redder, but he did not trust himself to answer as yet.

"I ask for an explanation from a somewhat different motive," continued the detective, earnestly. "I like you personally, and believe that you want to be a true and honest man."

"Thank you! Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Quite complimentary, I am sure! Ach!"

"Not at all. But," significantly, "if you are in the scoundrel's power, I'd like to help you out of it. Anything will be preferable to seeing such a good fellow continually and so slavishly standing up for a man whom you must *know* (unless an idiotic fool, which you certainly are not) to be an infamous and murderous villain."

Then old Reisbach exploded.

"It is not true—you are all wrong!" he burst out. "I know him not as a villain, and I am in no man's secret power! Markheim has his little faults, and who has them not? He is hasty, passionate, a—ur—trifle resentful, perhaps. But he is a good man, a valuable man. He has been misrepresented, and circumstances have been against him. Moreover, he is vouched for afresh by these rich Jewish amusement-caterers, Mr. Moses and Mr. Solomons. You are blinded by passion and prejudice. You don't know what you are talking about. I sha'n't stay here tamely to be insulted!"

He crushed his hat on his head, beat the air with his walking-stick, and rushed out of the room.

Both Luella and Old Grip were too much

grieved at the old showman's infatuation, or call his conduct by what name they might, to laugh very heartily at his explosiveness.

A moment later, Cheese-it entered with a card.

"Two gentlemen down-stairs, who respectfully request an audience with Miss Shoresby," he announced, very solemnly, but with the suggestion of a grin.

"Who are they?" asked Luella.

The boy presented the card.

"Mr. Moses and Mr. Solomons."

CHAPTER XXXI.

A MEMORABLE INTERVIEW.

"Show the gentlemen up at once, Cheese-it," directed Miss Shoresby, after exchanging a glance with Old Grip.

The pretended Jews presently made their appearance, were received with flattering cordiality by the beautiful young hostess, and took the seats proffered them with a display of gratitude quite Oriental in its servility.

"Ve haff peeness, barticular peeness, Mees Shoresby," observed Mr. Moses, after the preliminaries, and with a significant glance at the detective. "Couldn't ve see you alone mit it?"

"No, sir," replied Luella, promptly.

The detective had already recalled himself to the visitors' recollection, as Miss Shoresby's agent and man-of-business.

"Shpeak it out, Mr. Moses, shpeak it out!" cried M. Solomons, with an air of effusiveness. "Dere ish nutting like vranness in peeness avvairs."

"No, nothing like frankness—when you get it," observed Luella, smiling. "Do come to the point of your visit at once, my dear Mr. Moses, as my time is scarcely my own. I am a business, no less than a professional, woman."

"To do point, den, my tear lady," returned Mr. Moses, genially, rubbing his hands. "My honest friendt, Mr. Markheim—"

"Is not to be discussed in my presence. So there!"

"I hear you haff decided against him provisionaly, Mees Shoresby; but I must shpeak of him in anoder vay."

"Oh!"

"You sbee, Mr. Solomons and I, ve pees Mr. Markheim's achents."

"Yes."

"Unt Mr. Markheim hash indrusted a toocment to our geeping."

"Ah!"

"It ish a ferry imbordant toocment, Mees Shoresby."

"What is it?"

"It ish a lasd vill unt desadament off your lamented fader, Mees Shoresby."

"Indeed!"

"Yesh; unt it devises one-halluf your fader's esdade to our glient, Mr. Markheim."

"Let me see it."

Mr. Moses laboriously brought forth an enormous red morocco pocketbook, out of which he produced a document, which he handed to the young lady.

It was the same that Markheim had pretended to have taken from the envelope found under the false bottom of the strong-box.

Now that she was enabled to examine it at her leisure, she quickly perceived the writing to be only a clever imitation of her father's.

"Mr. Gripon, suppose you take a look at this extraordinary paper," said she, handing it to the detective.

"Where did you get this, Mr. Moses?" he demanded, without moving a muscle.

"Vrom Mr. Markheim, sir."

"Where and how did he obtain it?"

"I doan't know dot."

"Why did he induce you to produce it here?"

"Pecause de young lady refused to dreat mit him brovessionally."

"Oh! because she has refused to employ him and Gorgo in the show of which she and Mr. Borepaw are the joint proprietors?"

"Yesh."

"Dot ish it!" suddenly interposed the skeleton-like Mr. Solomons, leaping up and down in his seat, and clapping his hands exuberantly. "Dot ish it, py Chiminitely!"

"Pe cu-viet, Mr. Solomons, pe more cu-viet unt gomposed!" rebuked his colleague, with dignity. "I am der shpokesman in dis avvair."

The detective tossed the paper back to Mr. Moses, with a smile.

"Does your 'glient,' Mr. Markheim, smoke?" he asked.

"I believe so, Mr. Gripon. V'y do you ask?"

"Tell him to light his next cigar with that forged paper. It can do him no more good."

"Forched!" yelled Mr. Moses, with holy horror, which was dramatically reflected by his companion: "forched!"

"Yes, forched."

"Impossible!"

"Let him offer it for probate, then."

"So he zhall, sir; so he zhall!"

"All right."

"Dot toocment is a goot toocment."

"Glad you think so!"

The interview had occupied much more time than is indicated by the foregoing conversation.

which has been much condensed, and at this juncture it was interrupted by a knock at the door.

It proved to be Cheese-it, with Tom Vincent, who had come from Mr. Borepaw to say that Chimborazo, the trained grizzly belonging to Markheim, was on the rampage, together with the great elephant, Minotaur, and that it was feared Old Grip, in the absence of the animal's master, would have to come and endeavor to quiet him.

The detective smiled, while watching the effect of this announcement on the *pseudo*. Mr. Moses, who could scarcely conceal his uneasiness; for if there was anything in the world that Markheim was capable of truly loving, it was the great bear, Chimborazo.

But the effect of the announcement upon Miss Shoresby was entirely different.

"Have they dared to incorporate Markheim's brute with our collection?" she cried, indignantly.

"Chimborazo was stalled in the Garden, ma'm, early this morning," replied Vincent, respectfully.

"Upon whose order?"

"Mr. Borepaw's."

She bit her lips.

"I shall see Mr. Borepaw with regard to this, Vincent," she said, with forced calmness. "Nothing belonging to Eben Markheim shall be incorporated in the show while I have an interest in it."

"What shall I say to Mr. Borepaw, ma'm?"

Old Grip caught Luella's eye at this juncture, and answered for her.

"Tell him to be under no anxiety, Tom," said he. "If the brute should really get into one of his uncontrollable fits, let him send for me again."

"Yes, sir."

"I shall come then and shoot him with the utmost pleasure."

Mr. Moses bounded in his chair.

"Shoot Chimborazo?" he yelled.

The detective pretended great astonishment, while Luella began to understand his drift and to fall in with it.

"Why this excitement, Mr. Moses?" he exclaimed, signing Vincent and Cheese-it, who accordingly took their departure. "Are you also Chimborazo's special agent?"

"No, sir; oh, no!" replied the pretended Hebrew, recovering his equanimity in a measure. "But I do loaf animals, Mr. Grippon, unt I know my client, Mr. Markheim, values dot Chimborazo mosht highly."

"But you evidently don't understand the brute in question," observed the detective, quite confidentially. "He gets into moods—dangerous tantrums, you know—which his master alone can successfully control. In such cases a bullet, comfortably lodged where it can do the most good, is the only remedy. Now, you see, I am just the doctor for such a case, Mr. Moses, for, if the truth must be told, there is no love lost between the obstreperous Chimborazo and me."

The detective waxed garrulous with his theme. He went on in a similar strain for a considerable length of time, as much to Luella's secret satisfaction as to Mr. Moses's discomfort.

At last the latter sprung to his feet and seized his hat.

"I kess ve gan do no peesness dis morning," he said, making his cringing bow to Luella. "My friendt, Mr. Solomons, unt I vill take a walk. Ve may even trop into der Garten unt see dot Chimborazo."

"As you please, Mr. Moses," replied Luella, smiling sweetly.

But at this juncture Mr. Reisbach came bustling into the room in great excitement.

His innocence of the pretended Jew's real character was sufficiently obvious.

"You'll have to come to the Garden at once, Grippon!" he exclaimed. "That infernal grizzly is on the regular rampage. He has already seriously injured two keepers, and no one dares get near enough to chain him up. He has had a tussle with Minotaur, and when I left he was ripping the side out of the jaguar cage. Come along!"

Old Grip lazily arose, while Luella, intent upon being present at the pretended Mr. Moses's exposure (which she knew to be his secret determination), began to put on her hat and gloves.

"A good deal of unnecessary excitement over a ridiculous old grizzly!" suggested the detective, taking up his hat. "Have you tried noosing the brute?"

His eye was on Mr. Moses, who once more could with difficulty restrain his perturbation.

"Yes, but without effect," replied Reisbach.

"Then why haven't you killed him on the spot? One bullet would do it."

Mr. Moses danced on the floor an instant and then stopped.

"The animal is valuable—the only trick grizzly in the country. Do come on, Grippon."

They accordingly all quitted the hotel together, and were soon in the presence of the angry brute.

Chimborazo had all one corner of the Garden to himself, with the exception of Minotaur occupying his pen near by, and it already looked

as if a cyclone had been at work in that quarter.

"I fancy there is only one remedy," coolly remarked the detective, drawing his revolver.

Mr. Moses sprung into the air, with a sort of protesting howl.

CHAPTER XXXII.

UNMASKED.

MARKHEIM, in the character of Mr. Moses, was still, however, desirous of keeping up the disguise which he evidently regarded as unpeneetrated, as yet.

"You must not kill dot crizzly pear!" he shouted. "It is der property of mein friendt, Mr. Markheim. I protest against such gruelties!"

"Sho do I!" cried the fictitious Solomons. "It must not pe!"

Old Grip coolly dawdled with the revolver, while Chimborazo continued his rampage.

"Produce your friend, Markheim, then, to quiet the brute," he said. "Where is he?"

"That is it!" spoke up Borepaw, who, entirely unsuspicious of the counterfeits' identity, or of the public unmasking on which the detective was secretly intent, was beginning to get disgusted with the damage the frantic animal was causing. "Let Markheim be forthcoming, or the brute must go."

"No, no, no!" Mr. Moses continued to protest. "Der crizzly ish valuable bropperty, and Mr. Markheim ish not here. He ish in seglusion."

"Well, we can't have our show-property ruined because of his absence. The brute won't prove much of a card, anyway; and if he lets those jaguars out of their cage, I give fair warning that some one has got to pay the extra damages."

He glanced inquiringly at Luella as he spoke.

"That stands to reason," she said, approvingly. "The show-property has suffered enough already."

The disguised Markheim continued to protest wildly, though he could do nothing more.

He was in an agony of hesitation. The great beast was as the apple of his eye. A word and touch of his familiar voice and hand would reduce its savage mood to docility, and thus save its life. And yet this could not be done without the exposure of his own identity, as well as Gor-goo's, before all those present; and thus, in addition to the shame and humiliation of it, hopelessly prevent his employment in the show, upon which he had already calculated so highly in the furtherance of fresh plots against Luella and the detective, and perhaps render any future operations on his part to that end insignificant, or wholly abortive.

In the mean time, Chimborazo was having it all his wild way in the corner that he had appropriated, and the chief wonder was that he did not make any hostile demonstrations against the crowd of onlookers, mostly persons connected with the show, who were grouped just behind the stout rope-railing that separated this part of the animal department from the main or hippodrome section of the building.

Perhaps the chief explanation lay in the fact of his frenzy being sufficiently engrossed with the other wild animals in his immediate neighborhood.

Minotaur, already with his proboscis badly lacerated, was tugging resentfully at his chain and trumpeting for all he was worth; the caged lions, tigers, leopards, hyenas and panthers, not far away, were restless and noisy; and the infuriated grizzly was still chawing and clawing at the jaguar cage—whose inmates, far more powerful and ferocious than the leopards, which they greatly resemble in appearance, were bounding back and forth in a perfect frenzy—with a fine prospect of either upsetting it from its trestles or wholly demolishing it.

"This will never do!" shouted Borepaw. "Make ready with that slip-noose again. We'll try once more to lasso him."

"You can't do it," cried Reisbach, while the noose was being made ready. "I've had experience with that beast. He can dodge a lariat like a Comanche Indian."

"We'll try it again, though. I hate to kill the animal."

"Dot ish right!" yelled Moses. "Try him mit der slip-noose. Dot ish de vay."

He knew perfectly well the effort would be useless, but time would be gained, which in his present quandary would be something.

"There are only two here who might try the eye-power in quieting him," suggested Reisbach, with a significant glance at Luella and Old Grip.

"Bears are not in my line," responded the young lady, coolly. "I sha'n't make the attempt."

"Nor shall I," the detective answered for himself. "Chimborazo and I are not on speaking terms."

This settled that point.

Here a cast was made with the lasso, but with no manner of success.

Chimborazo ceased his work of havoc just long enough to cast off the noose with a lightning-like movement of his great paws, as cleverly as if they had been human hands, and then went on more obstreperously than before.

"Let me try the taming-eye," said a calm and sweet voice from behind the crowd.

Nearly every one was surprised, for it was La Lesteur, who, having thus spoken, stepped forward, and her presence had not been noted.

In another moment she had passed under the rope, gently motioned the lariat-throwers to one side, and was advancing straight toward the infuriated grizzly.

There was a hush among the on-lookers of this curious scene, and this unlooked-for intervention on the part of the French animal-taming madame was at once the cynosure of all eyes.

Superbly proportioned, and, though no longer in her youth, surpassed only by Luella in grace and beauty, no less than in this singular field of feminine professional skill, La Lesteur advanced slowly and majestically amid the furious hubbub of savage cries, with her hand firmly stretched out toward the ramping grizzly, and her steadfast, fearless gaze striving to arrest the attention of the refractory brute's fiery orbs, which were rolling in blood and as restless as a cornered rat's.

But the experiment, however heroic, was not destined to be thoroughly tested.

At this instant, Minotaur, the huge elephant, broke his foot-chains, and, charging through his roped inclosure as if it were made of straw, rushed revengefully upon the grizzly with a wild scream.

The latter was game for anything in his frenzy, but, though wheeling with surprising velocity, and dealing Minotaur another cruel wip on the proboscis with both claw-armed paws, he was momentarily taken at a disadvantage.

The next instant, reared helplessly on his hind legs, and uselessly beating the air with his hairy arms, he was pinned against the end of the partly-demolished jaguar-cage, between the pachyderm's terrible tusks.

Then the elephant's trunk came into effective service, rising and falling with stunning force on the grizzly's defenseless head.

"Let 'em fight it out!" shouted Borepaw. "That simplifies it. Minotaur will kill him in no time!"

But it was not to be.

In that instant the damaged cage was overturned.

There was a roaring, spotted-and-tawny flurry inside, Chimborazo, after being on his back an instant, began to climb and claw his way up over the astounded Minotaur's face, and then the jaguars—a mated pair of them that had never been tamed or disciplined—were loose.

There was a general cry of consternation.

The jaguars had simultaneously sprung upon Madame Lesteur.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PLOTTERS OUTPLOTTED.

IT was a terribly dramatic and tragic scene, even for a wild animal collection in an uproar.

The taming power of the Frenchwoman was as nothing with the savage jaguars, each of which had fastened upon one of her shoulders, by which purchase, though not seriously injuring her as yet, they were slowly bearing her to the earth; and the grizzly—now victoriously driving the elephant back into his pen, and with his own blind, destructive fury tenfold increased—would also be once more at full liberty in another moment.

There were apparently but two among the spectators who retained their presence of mind.

These were Luella Shoresby and Old Grip, the Showman Detective.

The former took the initiative.

"Look to the grizzly!" she exclaimed. "I will rescue the woman."

She had caught up a short bar of iron while speaking, and was under the rope like an arrow.

The detective bounded after her, making for the proximity of the bear, revolver in hand.

"Don't shoot dot crizzly!" yelled "Mr. Moses" again, hopping about on the sawdust and wringing his hands, in spite of "Mr. Solomons's" efforts to recall him to prudence. "I'll biff der law on you if you shoot dot crizzly!"

He was wholly unheeded.

Luella, on her part, was just in time to catch the falling Frenchwoman on her arm, and then she was raining crushing blows on the jaguars' heads with the iron bar.

They shrank, snarling, back for an instant from their original victim, and then, gathering themselves together for a fresh short spring, crouched, fastening their fiery yellow eyes on the new enemy, their cruel teeth glistening between their heavy lips.

But the second spring was never made.

At that critical instant the taming power of Luella's blue, victorious eyes asserted its mysterious spell, holding them, jungle wild as they were, as in a vise.

A moment more, and Vincent, with others, had leaped upon them, and they were securely wound up in stout ropes, preparatory to being thrown into a fresh cage.

Almost at the same instant, Chimborazo, having whipped the elephant back into his pen, was rearing on his hind legs, a horrent monster of

savage ferocity and frenzy, in his preparation to hurl himself on the detective.

The latter threw one lightning-like glance back over his shoulder, and received an assenting nod from Mr. Borepaw.

There was a last protesting howl from the pretended Mr. Moses, but without avail.

The revolver cracked, true to its aim, and Chimborazo, the great and only trick-grizzly, was dead on the ground with the detective's bullet in his heart.

There was a furious cry, scarcely less savage than the huge beast's death-cry.

Then Markheim—heedless of his disguise and vainly followed by his companion in an effort to quiet him—rushed forward and threw himself, in a passion of grief, upon the dead bear.

"Curse you, Old Grip! you shall pay for this," he stormed, with a torrent of mingled profanity and sobs. "It was the best bear that was ever trained—I loved him as a brother—and you have murdered him—murdered him!"

With the exception of Luella and Old Grip, and possibly of Madame Lesteur, everybody was amazed at this explosion, together with the self-betrayal that it implied.

"Hallo!" shouted the detective, in pretended surprise. "Odd sorts of Hebrew capitalists these, my friends!"

And he unceremoniously tore off wigs and false beards right and left, completing the exposure of the wearers' identity.

There was a roar of amazement and derision from nearly every one present, for both Markheim and Gorgo were personally known to a large majority of the profession.

"Gentlemen and ladies, one and all!" cried the detective, in his clear voice; "in the light of the persistent persecution that Miss Luella Shoresby and your humble servant, in her behalf, have undergone on the part of these men, and much of which must be known to you, as professionals, you can judge for yourselves their motive for the assumption of this false character of which they now stand unmasked."

"Ear! 'ear!" vociferously interrupted Silas Grimwald, while there was a fresh roar of execration. "'Eave 'em out on a chip! 'Ang 'em up by the 'eels! No quarter for such outrageously hanimalis! They're an 'owling and hunmituated disgrace to the profesh!"

"At all events," concluded the detective, with a significant look at Borepaw and Reisbach, "let us hope that no more shall be said of the employment in this show of these two scoundrels, even at the most earnest solicitation of—of their high-minded and conscientious Jewish agents."

This produced a laugh that was a good thing for both Markheim and Gorgo, who might otherwise have fared hard at the hands of the indignant show people.

Borepaw was scratching his head with a disgusted, sheepish look, while Reisbach had turned as red as a turkey-cock.

Madame Lesteur, who had narrowly escaped being seriously injured by the jaguar's attack, was standing by the side of Miss Shoresby, her rescuer, in a somewhat retired spot.

She was pale and composed, and her black eyes were resting with a deeply commiserating and somewhat devouring look upon the miserable Markheim, who, no longer heedful of his exposure, was still moaning over the lifeless body of his ursine friend, while Gorgo was cowering near at hand, apparently in an agony of alarm lest he should receive the meed of his treacherous duplicity then and there—for he had never been liked in the profession, even with his special talents duly recognized, and must just now have felt himself to be particularly abominated.

La Lesteur was, in her turn, being scrutinized by a pair of eyes whose baleful and jealous hatred might well have caused her some disquiet, had she but known of their being thus fastened upon her.

This pair of eyes belonged to none other than the airy, fairy Olga Reisbach.

Together with her mother, she had arrived among the spectators when the dramatic tableau was at its climax, and now her whole jealous nature was bent on watching that loving, hungering gaze of La Lesteur's, and to know if it would be responded to by Markheim—the villain that she, Olga, still loved to distraction, notwithstanding no little slighting treatment on his part, more especially since the dissolution of the Reisbach Show.

"It is rumored that they are meeting each other constantly—have even been secretly married!" she muttered, between her set teeth. "Let me but have proof of this by so much as an answer-look, a responsive glance—Ha!"

She clutched her heart with her tiny gloved hand, and started back with a vehemence wholly incomprehensible to her mother.

"Whatever is the matter with you, my dear?" demanded the Boadicean "Irmgard," with anxiety. "The rumpus is about at an end now."

"It is nothing, mamma—a sudden pain, that was all!" and Olga tried to smile.

Markheim had risen from his mourning over the slain bear, and, catching Madame Lesteur's glance, had returned it with a somewhat grateful look.

Mr. Borepaw strode over, and placed a heavy

hand on Markheim's shoulder, while giving Gorgo a contemptuous glance that included him in his words.

"You ought to consider yourself about at the end of your rope!" he said, harshly. "I shall see that no immediate violence is offered you here, but the sooner you quit this building the better for you."

Markheim inclined his head with a sort of dignified mournfulness.

"I shall send for Chimborazo's body," he replied, in a low voice. "If it takes my last dollar in the world, the skin shall be stuffed and mounted."

Then, with a last lingering look at his slain friend (why are unprincipled criminals, often so pitiless to their fellows, commonly fond to passionateness of the dumb brutes they make their friends?) he signed to Gorgo to follow, and strode away.

As the pair passed under the rope—the crowd silently and contemptuously drawing apart for their passage—La Lesteur, who as yet had uttered no word of thanks to Luella for her rescue—suddenly quitted the latter's side.

The next instant she had joined Markheim, and, putting her wrist gently through his arm, had passed out of sight with him by the nearest mode of egress.

The crowd seemed to understand and see something worthy of respect in the woman's act.

At all events, Markheim's retreat was wholly unmolested, while Gorgo's was assisted by sundry kicks in the posterior that expedited his exit materially.

"Look at Olga!" whispered Old Grip, who had at last returned to Luella's side.

Olga's face, ordinarily so innocent and fairy-like, was the face of a fiend, though she was just drawing down her veil.

"Straws betoken the wind," said Luella, thoughtfully. "We may know more of this some time."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

RIVALS FOR A VILLAIN'S LOVE.

"ANYTHING new as to La Lesteur?" asked the detective, a fortnight later, during which everything had gone smoothly with Miss Shoresby's affairs, and without any further demonstration on the part of the common enemy.

"I believe not," replied Luella. They were holding their customary morning conversation in her little hotel parlor. "She is still a mystery to all the people at the show?"

"It isn't even suspected where she lives, then, since her sudden disappearance from the hotel here, directly following upon the exposure of Markheim and Gorgo?"

"No; she is as much of a mystery as ever."

"Still simply disappears after her show duties, springs into a hack, and vanishes into the nowhere?"

"That is the situation."

"But she is doubtless living with Markheim somewhere?"

"The general impression."

"Not over-happy, either, I should say, judging by her looks latterly?"

"I think not. Celeste is looking worn and old in the past two or three days."

"Altogether different from her radiant content of some days previous?"

"Indeed, yes!"

"What do you think?"

"What everybody else does."

"And that is—?"

"That Markheim is living on her wages in some obscure tenement, and is beginning to maltreat her, into the bargain."

"Humph! I wouldn't speak of the woman by her first name, if I were you."

"Why not?"

"Look how contemptibly mean she has treated you!"

Luella laughed.

"Oh! simply because she has never come to thank me in regard to the affair with the jaguars?"

"Yes."

"That is nothing."

"I should say it was everything. The woman is a heartless ingrate!"

"Not so bad as that, I hope."

"How can you make anything else out of it?"

"Well, La Lesteur is not exactly one of the demonstrative sort."

"I should say she wasn't!"

"Then there is her absorbing love for Markheim."

"A monster!"

"Still, a woman's love, no matter how worthless its object, is—a woman's love."

"Is it possible?"

Luella broke into a really hearty laugh this time, in which her lover (Old Grip was generally recognized as her betrothed now) joined her to a moderate degree.

"Hadn't La Lesteur deserted her husband just prior to your giving her employment at Trenton?" he demanded, persistently returning to the subject.

"Quite the contrary. He had deserted her, and in order to run off with another woman."

"Children!"

"Yes," reluctantly. "In an institution now, I believe."

Old Grip frowned. He had little charity for irregularities of the sort suggested.

"That woman is forty-five, if she's a day!" he muttered.

"But she's a Frenchwoman, my dear friend."

He made a gesture, as if washing his hands of a disagreeable affair.

"You, at least, have charity enough for the ingrate!" he said, gravely.

"It isn't charity," replied the noble Luella, simply.

"What, then?"

"Apart from Celeste having been an old friend of my father's, I simply recollect that she is a woman, and—a selfish villain's dupe."

The detective caught her in his arms, and kissed her.

"Luella, you are a noble girl!" he exclaimed.

"When shall I fitly appreciate all the grand, womanly generosity you are capable of?"

"All in good time, I hope, my dear Edward—supposing that you do not rate me immensely beyond my worth. That will do, now," gently disengaging herself. "Well, when are you going to tell me of it?"

"Tell you of what?"

"Of La Lesteur's secret—her abiding-place, together with that of Markheim and Gorgo, as a matter of course."

"How should I know?"

"As if you hadn't solved that mystery long ago!"

"Well, it is true. Cheese-it has been watching the place, like a small sparrow-hawk, for the better part of the past fortnight."

"Just as I surmised! Where is it, then?"

"Tell me first what you would do?"

"Can you ask? Rescue my father's old associate from a degrading infatuation, as a matter of course."

"In spite of her base ingratitude toward you?"

"Let that pass, I tell you! Such an infatuation, especially with a woman of her age—all the fiercer, perhaps, because the last flicker of expiring embers—excuses a great deal."

"It is a dangerous neighborhood. Moreover, you would have to dispatch, or your generosity might be forestalled by a much baser intervention."

"Whom do you refer to?"

"Olga Reisbach."

"Ah! I know that she is furiously jealous, that she has already employed the Drubbeljahs in vain to track Celeste after the performances, and that she would give her finger-rings to be able to communicate with Markheim."

"Is that all you know?"

"Yes."

"It isn't much."

"Tell me what you know?"

"Olga has already communicated with him; is doing so every day now, clandestinely of course, and unknown to the miserable Lesteur."

"What is this you tell me?"

"The truth. Cheese-it reports it, and he is no less accurate than sleepless when on a particular scent."

"What do you infer from all this—that Markheim is wholly discouraged in his pursuit of me?"

"Yes."

"How do you account for it?"

"Strange as it may seem, the death of that pet grizzly of his seems to have broken him up. Of course, he doubtless still cherishes an undying hatred for me; but that is about all. He is become changed and morose; moreover, he has taken to hard drinking."

"I ought to feel relieved at all this. But I can't exactly—perhaps on poor Celeste's account."

"Of course you can't; you are too noble."

"If you give me any more of this fulsome flattery, my dear, you and I shall quarrel."

"I'll only think it, then."

"I'll try to put up with that. Has Markheim, then, do you think, given up his designs upon my patrimony?"

"Yes."

"I find it difficult to agree with you."

"Oh, I have thought it all out. Markheim is no fool, though often desperate to the extent of lunacy. Indeed, I have at times of late thought him not right in his head."

"I can agree with you there; the absurdity of his forged claim was so glaring."

"Yes; there was a mere chance of his bluffing the game, and it failed. Since the summary unmasking of his Hebraic characterization, he has doubtless come to the saner conclusion that the forgery won't wash. As I said before, his simple hatred of me alone remains. You'll hear no more of his fictitious claim, save perhaps to have it thoroughly exposed in the end."

"This is comforting to me."

"I knew you would find it so."

"And Gorgo?"

"A bloodthirsty tool, to be ingulfed in the same doom that awaits his master."

"You hope, then, to bring my father's death home to these two?"

"Yes; and that soon."

"By what means?"

"Chi fly through Gorgo's fears."

"His fears?—a tie'er's!"

"You mistake. The thug is only fearless and desperate when under such superior direction as Markheim's, which is beginning to fail him now. He is as listless as a benumbed snake. If I once get him wholly isolated and in my power, he is done for, no less than Markheim."

"Where are they living?"

"In the squalid top-roost of an enormous tenement, in a particularly horrible neighborhood, at the foot of one of the streets opposite Blackwell's Island."

"And can Celeste be living there with them?"

"In rooms on the same floor. Anything to be near her idolized monster, you see, though he is already, while continuing to exist on her wages, beginning to maltreat her shamefully."

"This is appalling!"

Here there was a tap on the door, and the faithful lad, Cheese-it, made his appearance.

He made a sign to the detective.

"I'll be back presently," said the latter, to Luella, "and probably with some fresh news of interest for you."

"I shall wait, and receive no one else till your return," replied Miss Shoresby, as he quitted the room with the boy.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AIRY, FAIRY OLGA.

"THEY'RE together now," said Cheese-it, as soon as they were outside the room.

"Olga and Markheim?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Come with me, boss."

"But in what place are they conversing?"

"In the Drubbeljah rooms."

The detective followed without another word. The Drubbeljahs, brother and sister, occupied a small and inexpensive suite of rooms on the topmost floor of the hotel.

Cheese-it indicated an open door to the detective upon their having noiselessly reached this floor, and then disappeared at a nod.

The door was doubtless ajar on account of the heat of the day, which was considerable.

The sounds of voices came through it, and, the corridor being wholly deserted at this hour—the rest of this airy floor being chiefly occupied by the servants' quarters—the detective was enabled to approach it undetected.

He was not inclined to eavesdropping, as a rule, but had no hesitancy on the present occasion.

The voices were speedily recognizable as belonging to Olga and Markheim, and a covert glance showed that Ayettah Drubbeljah was also present.

The Hindu girl sat just within the partly open door, doubtless in the capacity of a lookout, but with her back to the corridor at this moment.

Old Grip presently attained a position in a curtained nook, half-filled with piled-up laundry-baskets, on the opposite side, and a little further along, whence he could plainly distinguish the conversing voices from a secure concealment, but without seeing into the room.

"But how can I know whether to trust in your professions or not, Eben?" Olga's voice was saying. "You swore you loved me, and me alone, even just before that hateful and ridiculously ancient Lesteur sneaked off to live in the same house with you."

"And I loved you then just the same, if not more than ever, my darling little girl," was Markheim's wheedling reply.

"How do you explain your conduct, then?"

"As I have explained it to you over and over again."

"Say it again. I am getting rather exacting."

"I should say you were, you terrible little fairy!" There was the sound of a kiss. "I was, as you know, an ostracized, almost hunted man, besides being all but dead-broke, after paying for having the skin of poor Chimbórazo mounted."

"Well?"

"Well, was I to blame for taking advantage of that foolish woman's infatuation?"

"I'll see about that."

"She found me out in the miserable roost up on the East side, in which Gorgo and I had been forced to take refuge. Well, I can't seek employment as yet, and her money supports us in the mean time; that is the long and short of it."

"She lives with you as your wife!" in a hard, savage tone.

"By Heaven, she does not, Olga! but only occupies a room on the same floor. What species of moral monster do you take me for?"

"Why, then, should she give you her wages?"

"Because she's so far gone on me, I suppose, as to be merely content with breathing the same air that I do—the old fool! I call her Grandmamma Celeste."

"What! to her face?" with a loud laugh.

"Of course. Why not?"

"Madame Lesteur is still a fine-looking woman, however."

"Pah! There is but one dear little woman in

the world that I want—not an old woman, either, but a fairy, a Hebe!"

Another kiss.

"Don't, Eben! I—I am half-afraid of you."

"Of my love for you? An odd sort of fear, surely."

"There is your pursuit of Luella Shoresby still to be explained."

"It is ended. I can't get at her money, which was all I cared for."

"Then you acknowledge defeat on the part of her lover, Old Grip?"

"Yes, necessarily, at least for the present. Don't mention that man's name to me, Olga, unless you want to drive me mad! His time will come, either through me or Gorgo, curse him!"

"I'm sure I hope so; I have always disliked the detective."

"Let be, let be, I tell you!"

"Good, then!"

"By the way, my darling!"

Another kiss.

"What is it, dear Eben?"

"Have you been able to bring me a little money?"

"Yes; I had forgotten. Here are twenty dollars I borrowed from mamma last night."

"Thanks! What a treasure you are! This will see me through for a few days—till Celeste is paid off again."

"Celeste, and still Celeste!" furiously. "Shall you ever get rid of the old creature?"

Markheim laughed. His laugh, like his voice, once musical enough, had become permanently husky.

"Of course I shall," he replied.

"But how will you rid yourself of her now, without exciting her jealous resentment, and thus giving yourself away?"

"Aha! Leave that to me."

"She can show the temper of a fiend on occasion—I know it."

"Leave it to me, I tell you. There is a way."

"But what way?"

"You'll find out soon enough, my precious, after it is done."

"But when shall you get rid of her?"

"Can you ask—knowing my love, and how I long to make you my wife?"

"That is well enough in its way, Eben. But I can and do ask when you shall rid yourself of this hateful old incubus."

"When you shall be ready to elope with me, my own."

"I am ready now—at any time."

"And where is the money to come from with which to elope?"

"I don't know," desperately.

"Yes, you do, my love. Can you still devise no means to get at that money of your father's in the bank?"

Olga's voice was slightly troubled as she replied:

"Haven't I been thinking it over and over, Eben? And yet I cannot altogether find the heart for it."

"Your heart belongs to me, my darling; don't forget that."

"I know, I know! But poor old daddy! he has had such hard luck, and that eight thousand dollars in the bank is all that he has left in the world."

"Nonsense! He still has show property worth three times the amount."

"Cash, I mean."

"He has the talent to make more at will; the freedom and opportunity, too, which I no longer have."

"Still—"

"Well, well; let it go, then. Our dream of love is simply over, and I shall have to go back to Grandmamma Celeste, and make the best of it."

"Stop, Eben, Eben!" There was the sound of his getting abruptly on his feet and of her detaining him, probably by throwing her arms around him. "Don't you dare!"

"Let me go. Nothing is left me."

"Stop, I say. I shall find some means of obtaining the money, indeed I shall!"

"But how and when?"

"I don't know. Mamma has the power of checking out the money. Perhaps I can invent some excuse for persuading her to do it, when my father is absent from the city. At all events, it shall be obtained, and soon—soon!"

"This is something like."

"Let me see: you couldn't check out the money, I suppose?"

"Forgery? Not much, thank you! I'm near enough in the clutch of the law, as it is."

"Well, well, I shall find the means. Anything to be off with you in the far fair foreign lands—to be your own, your wife!"

"Ah! talk of earthly paradises! I wonder if Sorab keeps anything to drink around here."

"Yes, yes; a bottle in the next room, which I shall bring to you. But do sit down again! I have so much more to say—you must not think of going yet."

The supremely disgusted listener had by this time absorbed as much of the conversation as he deemed necessary, and he stole out of his nook, to take himself off.

He succeeded in repassing the door without detection.

But on gaining the first landing, in his descent of the stairs, he felt a light touch on the shoulder.

He turned.

It was Ayettah!

The Hindu girl had tracked him from the room-door with a footstep lighter than his own.

Why had she not given the alarm?

There was a peculiar smile in her soft, shadowy eyes, and her finger was upon her lips.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AYETTAH.

IN obedience to a sign, the detective, followed by Ayettah, went on further down the stairs, beyond the possibility of what they might say being overheard by the occupants of the room above.

"The sahib was listening up there?" said Ayettah, with a repetition of her peculiar smile.

"Yes."

"I knew it from the first; I even saw the sahib step behind the curtain."

"You must have seen through the back of your head, then." And the detective began to feel uncomfortable. "However, granted that you were aware of my eavesdropping from the very first, Ayettah."

"Yes, sahib."

"Well, what of it?"

"Nothing much."

"You were on guard; why did you not give the alarm?"

"I did not wish; with any one but the sahib, I would have given it."

"And why not with me?" asked the detective, yet more uneasily.

"Cannot the sahib guess?" her darkly beautiful face lighting up strangely.

"I don't choose to, anyway."

"It was because it was the sahib, and no one else."

Old Grip made no answer.

Though she had never troubled him with any particularly demonstrative attentions—the Nautch young woman was not of the demonstrative sort—that she had taken a passionate fancy to him from the very first, and that was a good while previously he was unwillingly and uncomfortably aware.

"And yet," still with her strange smile, "I know perfectly well that the sahib is the betrothed of the beautiful and fair-skinned Luella, and that he is an honorable man."

She gave her musical, teeth-displaying Gipsy laugh.

The detective studied her curiously.

After her swarthy fashion Ayettah was a very beautiful and fascinating young woman.

Her supple, willowy figure was yet robust and admirably proportioned. Her dark skin was of translucent clearness—a sort of softly illuminated bronze. Her eyes, black as midnight, were instinct with a mysterious softness, a tender solemnity, even when they wore her deep-shadow-lighted smile, which was a far-away one, as if associated with the dim past of her native Orient's history and traditions. For the rest, her features were regular and sweet, though sensuous; her only physical drawback being the exceeding coarseness of her long black hair, and even this was arranged with a careless and picturesque grace.

"You know all this of me?" demanded the detective, after a pause.

"Yes, sahib."

"Then why do you—do you make this preference in my favor?"

"I shall tell you frankly, Old Grip; it is for this reason that I have followed you here."

"Do so, I beg of you!"

"In the first place, I don't want you to think that I have really any sympathy for those two back up yonder—that reckless, unprincipled Olga, and that fallen, rum-soaking villain, for whom she would so heartlessly rob her own father."

This with an expression of unmitigated disgust, followed by a look of eager, anxious inquiry.

"I can't very well think otherwise of you, Ayettah," replied the detective, slowly.

"Ah! I understand!" bitterly. "Because Sorab and I have been so constantly on their side, as against Miss Shoresby and you! And you can't forget that I was with Olga and the boy on the falling trapeze, which all but frenzied the tigers into devouring Luella and yourself?"

He nodded sternly.

"You have about hit it, Luella. My memory is a retentive one."

"Sahib Old Grip," passionately, "I swear to you it has all been through Sorab's compulsion. I am afraid of my brother. From my infancy upward he has controlled and domineered me like a dog—as if I were not of the same caste as he. It is the custom in my country, where a maiden—always more or less despised by reason of her sex—loses her parents early. The elder brother takes

ribly at times—he beats me—I tremble for my life!" Her lip was quivering.

Old Grip reflected upon the probable truth of this. It had been rumored from the first that Sorab Drubbeljah occasionally treated his sister outrageously in secret; but, owing to their mysterious shrinking from outside associations—their habits of Oriental seclusion and taciturnity—an unverified rumor it had remained.

"Why have you never made this public?" he demanded. "You would have obtained protection."

"For the moment, yes."

"Well?"

"And Sorab's knife in my ribs on the following night."

"Still," continued the detective, after a pause, "there remains to be explained your friendliness in the past for Markheim and Gorgo, together with—"

She interrupted him with a frantic gesture, her face suddenly convulsed, her eyes blazing.

"Gorgo! Oh, that man, that serpent! For the love of God, sahib!"

"What is the matter?"

"That cobra! that ghoul! Sorab would have me marry him—that has been the chief trouble between us all along. I would sooner marry a python—caress a corpse!"

There was no disputing the genuineness of her horror and disgust.

"You have evidently something to propose to me, Ayettah?" said the detective, after giving her time to recover her composure.

"Yes."

"On my part, I would be your friend and Miss Shoreby's, as against them!" and she indicated the rooms up-stairs in a comprehensive sense. "That is, if you will only trust in my good-faith."

"Say that we shall trust you—that you can even make yourself very useful to us, as against the common enemy."

"Oh, I can, I can, and I shall!" she interposed, feverishly.

"Well and good! What would you then wish of us in return?"

Her face lighted up.

"You will soon be married to her, and perhaps going abroad for your honeymoon?"

"Take me with you! in any capacity you choose—as your servant, your slave, or—perhaps better—as the beautiful Luella's maid!"

The detective was astounded.

"Out of the question! unheard of!" was all he could say.

"Not if she consents? Luella is an angel. I will tell her my poor story. She will consent. I shall leave my cruel brother and his wicked country behind, with the great world of blue water heaving, pulsing and dancing between!"

"But this is unheard of!"

"What of that? I, too, am unheard of—different even from the strange people from which I spring. Oh, say at least that you will ask her!"

"But why would you go abroad especially in our company?"

"I love you!"

This was the very acme of melo-dramatic absurdity—the extremity of the sentimental picturesque, or insanity—which?

The detective burst into a sort of exasperated laugh.

"Truly Ayettah, you must be wholly beside yourself!" he exclaimed. "I credit your sufferings with having turned your head."

A low, strangely inarticulate, yet passionate, cry from the girl increased his bewilderment.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LUELLA'S DILEMMA.

AYETTAH was looking at him with her soul in her face, her brown, small hands extended to him, palm-upward, the delicate fingers hooked like the talons of a bird, a mute, beseeching appeal in her shadowy eyes.

"Do not laugh at me, sahib!" she murmured. "Whatever you do, however you may hate me, do not laugh at me, for the good Buddha's sake!"

"I am not laughing at you, but at the preposterousness of your proposition," replied the detective, kindly. "And as for hating you, quite to the contrary. I have never disliked you, and your account of your sufferings, your hard situation, has touched me."

Her face had lighted up.

"You must perceive the insanity of your proposal," continued Old Grip. "After we are married, my wife will of course monopolize all my love, even to a greater degree than she does now. And yet you would be associated with us, because you love me!"

"I am a very strange girl, sahib."

"I should say you were!"

"Different from every other girl you ever saw, I mean."

"Of course; but you must see the impropriety of such a thing."

"I would be content to love, love, love, and be forever silent—never even showing it by a word, a smile, a look!"

"Oh, nonsense!"

"It would be enough to be near you always

—I could make it enough, I mean. Even the heart-break behind my silence would be sweet—sweet!"

"Come, now; be reasonable."

"It is my way of being reasonable—to love and to suffer."

"What the deuce should you want to love me for?" cried Old Grip, beginning to lose all patience.

Her eyes lighted up.

"Because you are brave—a lion among men!" she cried, enthusiastically.

"Oh, the deuce!"

"You will at least ask the young lady about my proposition, sahib?"

"Not I! She'd deem me no less a fool than you."

"Ab! I may ask her myself, then. God be with you, sahib!"

She seized his hand, just swept it with her warm lips, and was gone.

The detective lost no time in rejoining Luella and acquainting her with everything that had passed.

"I always knew that Ayettah loved you," she observed, after listening to his revelations in astonishment, but without interruption or comment.

"Well, I wish she would considerably bestow her troublesome devotion elsewhere."

"She is, however, as she claims, a woman differing from every other. Leave me to deal with her."

"You don't mean to say you would consider her astounding proposition for an instant?"

"I don't see anything but to let me deal with her."

"But how can you deal with her?"

"That shall be my affair. But I think I can engage to enlist her in our service, and without injustice to her or cheating her in the least into the bargain."

"I hope you may."

"Now as to the Markheim-Olga elopement plot, the generalities of which you so fortunately overheard."

"Well and good."

"There are two things to be done without delay, as I think you will agree with me."

"Most probably."

"Celeste must be saved, and the robbery of Mr. Reisbach prevented."

"Agreed."

"The particulars of the robbery and elopement cannot have been fixed upon as yet, I presume."

"I should judge not."

"Still, I should like to carry the warning to Madame Lesteur at once."

"With all my heart! though it is a horribly blackguard neighborhood, as I said before."

"Perhaps it were better to go in disguise, then; but go I shall, and this very morning."

"We'll consult Cheese-it," and the detective touched the bell.

A servant came, and a few moments later Cheese-it made his appearance.

He was briefly informed of the conversation that had been overheard between Markheim and Olga, and of the intention to visit Madame Lesteur during the former's absence from the tenement.

Cheese-it scratched his head in some perplexity.

"No danger of meeting Markheim there by daylight so long as he has money to buy rum with," said he. "And Gorgo is also apt to be absent, awaiting his return in some one or another of the neighboring gin-mills."

"Just our opportunity, then?"

"Well, it's the worst hole in Yorkville, down there by the river."

"You know more of it than I. What is there especially awful about the locality?"

"Well, boss, the Bobtail Breezers hang out along the river-front there."

"Who are the Bobtail Breezers?"

"A gang."

"Oho!"

"A gang of toughs, young and old—the worst on the East side."

"What do they do?"

"Work the growler and slug strangers."

"Ah! But what has this to do with Miss Shoresby's proposed visit to the neighborhood?"

"Markheim is the Bobtail Breezers' big gun."

"Bless me! has the man fallen as low as that?"

"Well, you see, he drinks and brawls with 'em, boss, and then, he has a reputation behind him as an animal-tamer. The Bobtails like enough think the President of the United States can't hold a candle to Markheim."

"I begin to understand now. And Gorgo?"

"Oh, the Breezers make a sort of laughing-stock of the Java man. But then, he is still Markheim's friend, which goes a long way with them."

"I see. Then do you think we, or at least Miss Shoresby, had better go up there in disguise?"

"Yes, sir-ee!"

"Polly, my dear," said Luella, Mrs. Grimwold having just appeared from the adjoining room.

"Yes, ma'm."

"You know that fishwoman's dress I wore at the masquerade ball last year?"

"Yes, ma'm."

"Lay it out for me; I shall want you to help me on with it right away."

Polly threw up her hands.

"Lor', ma'm! you wouldn't wear that 'orrid dress hout upon the public 'ighway."

"Yes; have it ready at once. Come, I'll go with you."

The detective deemed a disguise no less necessary for himself, and also quitted the room.

He returned in the character of a New York tough of such pronounced appearance that an aristocratic dog might have bitten him without a preliminary sniff.

"Boss," Cheese-it ventured to remark, with a critical cock of the eye, "I fancy you'll pass muster even with the Bobtail Breezers."

"Thanks, my boy! but won't you want a disguise, too?"

"No, sir; I've managed to do my spying so far without coming in contact with any of the spied-on persons knowing it, and the Breezers leave me alone sort of natural-like."

Here there was a bustling movement, the snatch of a free-and-easy song, and Luella made her appearance in her disguise.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A SLUMMING EXPEDITION.

The disguised detective started back at first, and then burst into a loud laugh.

Cheese-it clapped his hands in approval, while Polly, who had followed her young mistress into the room, rolled up her eyes with cockney horror.

"'Eavens and hearth!" she murmured; "to think of Miss Luella Shoresby, the hony aristocratic belle of the 'ippodrome and hanimal business, a-goin' hon the fashionable 'ighways in that sort of rig!"

"What's the matter with you, honey?" exclaimed Luella to Old Grip, in affected surprise.

"Don't you like my new style?"

And she burst into a fresh fragment of popular song.

She was got up in a sort of short-skirted Dolly Varden costume, and, in spite of her youthful beauty, which could not wholly be buried away in the enormous, old-fashioned poke-bonnet that she wore, looked for all the world like a pretty, well-to-do young market-woman on a holiday, fresh from the Washington Market poultry and vegetable stands.

"Oh, you'll do, if I will!" cried the detective, still smiling. "Let us be going, then."

On their way down-stairs, they met and made themselves known to Mrs. Reisbach, without, however, giving her an inkling as to their object in view.

"Where is Papa Reisbach to-day?" inquired Luella, when the good woman had partly got over laughing at the odd, masquerading figures.

"He is out of the city."

"Out of the city!"

"Yes; a sudden business call up to Bridgeport, where he hopes to dispose of some of his animals. As he can't be back till late at night, Mr. Borepaw has excused him from this evening's performances."

"But wasn't this rather unexpected, Mamma Reisbach?"

"Very, my dear. He started off, in response to a telegram, less than an hour ago. And angrily enough, too, poor, dear man!"

"Why was he angry?"

"Because Olga couldn't be found to receive his good-by kiss. We've looked for her high and low without success, and I'm sure she can't have gone out shopping or visiting. It's a burning shame, the way that child takes on!" continued Mamma Reisbach, half tearful, half resentful. "Here is her father in hard luck—working on a salary, with most of his animal stock undisposed of, and eating their heads off, and only a last little nest-egg in the bank—and yet she never displays the least filial affection for either of us! One might almost say that Olga has got no heart."

"One could hardly be far wrong in saying it, I am afraid," observed the detective to Luella, when they had separated from the good woman, with such consolation as they could prudently offer.

"I should say not."

Cheese-it was with them.

When they were on the elevated cars, Luella, who had been very thoughtful, continued:

"Olga will, of course, know of her father's absence from the city as soon as her interview with Markheim terminates."

"Doubtless."

"Might she not seize this opportunity of getting possession of the bank-money, and eloping with Markheim out of hand, before her father's return?"

"Well thought of! I hardly think they are sufficiently forward with their plans to put them into execution in such short order. But we must consider the possibility of it, and make inquiries directly on our return."

"And if the money should prove to have been already fraudulently drawn from the bank?"

"Then Mrs. Reisbach must be informed at once, even if it break her heart, and the elopement nipped in the bud."

"But I don't see how they could draw the money, without Markheim forging Reisbach's name to a check; which you say he distinctly refused to do."

"I do."

"How?"

"By Olga herself forging her mother's signature—an uncouth scrawl, never two days alike, which a child might successfully imitate."

"Ah!"

"Yes; it is a savings-bank, you know; and I suppose, from what I overheard, that the account is in the names of both Mr. and Mrs. Reisbach."

"I understand so. Well, our first care is to get poor, foolish Madame Lesteur out of the jaws of her danger."

"Yes."

Luella was fairly appalled at the squalor of the river-front locality into which Cheese-it presently guided them.

Towering, many-windowed cheap tenements, mean groceries, filthy liquor saloons, fetid dives, sidewalks crowded with idle men, drunkards, sinister loafers, unkempt slatterns, brawling, half-naked children in swarms, beer-kegs in pyramids, dirt and refuse in foul-smelling stacks.

Who does not recognize the picture as a sadly representative one of too many evil localities in the great city?"

"To think of a woman like Celeste Lesteur making her home amid such environments!" murmured Luella, picking her way along the filthy sidewalk, in spite of, or forgetful of, the not over-fastidious character she was assuming.

"It is simply horrible!"

"There is the doorway," said Cheese-it.

He pointed to one of the worst-looking entrances on the block—a low-stooped open doorway, crowded in between two gin-mill show-windows, around which a crowd of toughs, most of them half-grown young men, were amusing themselves by hustling about a long, cadaverous-looking loafer in rusty black, who proved to be none other than Gorgo.

"And there are the Bobtail Breezers, too!" Cheese-it added, in a low voice.

All of the gang had by this time riveted their evil eyes upon the strangers, as though mentally "sizing them up," to use an expressive piece of slang, and three of them were already prancing forward with mock ceremony, touching their greasy hats and extending their grimy paws.

"Just a few nickels, to pay for the growler, admiral!" smirked the foremost, addressing the disguised detective, with an innocent look that set his companion-scamps off into rears of laughter.

"Suppose I say no."

"Then," with a glance at Luella, "Mistress Cabbages-and-Turnips here might have a hard time kissin' the hull gang, you know, stranger."

Old Grip promptly knocked the young blackguard and his two immediate companions down in lightning-like succession, and then seized the apparent ringleader by the throat.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

POOR MADAME LESTEUR.

ONLY for an instant did the detective keep his grip on the ruffian's neck, while shaking him till his very bones rattled.

Then, drawing him closer, he whispered two or three words in his ear, and hurled him backward with such violence that he tumbled and sprawled head-over-heels among his contemptible associates, who, however, can be so desperate and dangerous on occasion, as the daily police reports make so deplorably manifest.

The main gang had not time to organize united hostilities before their ring-leader was on his feet again, with a scared white face.

At a single significant sign he made there was a general scattering, and then every tough and blackguard of them, including Gorgo, had disappeared as completely as if the ground had opened to swallow them, and then closed again.

"What did you tell the fellow that caused such a scampering?" curiously asked Luella, as the trio entered the filthy hallway without further molestation.

"Merely my name," was the detective's placid reply, "and that, if he should mention it to a living soul within an hour's time, I would come back and break his neck."

A slatternly German woman, looking like a pork-butcher in skirts, and who said she was the janitress, met them at the foot of the rickety stairs with inquiries as to their business.

"Haven't you rooms to let, ma'm?" asked Luella, in her sprightliest market-woman manner.

"Blenty," was the phlegmatic reply. "Dere's always rooms to let out mit it in Slaughter Plock."

"Slaughter Block! What a picturesque name! But we are partial to the top floor, ma'm."

"Dwo rooms facant on der top vloor. Vour tollar a munt. Gome along!"

They followed her up the weary, creaking and close-smelling stair-flights, and through the yet worse communicating passages.

"Is this one of the apartments to let?" inquired Luella, at last.

She unceremoniously opened the first door at the topmost landing, and walked into the room in question—a rear one.

A squalid hole, with two beds, or pallets, one broken chair, a teetering wash-stand, and a table containing some clay tobacco pipes, an empty whisky-bottle, two glasses, and a scattered pack of greasy, dog-eared playing cards.

"No, id aind!"

"Well, we should hardly be suited with this apartment, palatial as it seems."

"Gome ouf of it, den! Dis room I dakes particular gare of. It pelongs to dwo shentlemens in der zhown pizness, vat dames lions unt digers unt snages—dat is, v'en deir not trunk."

"Oh, indeed! quite distinguished personages, no doubt."

And the room was as hastily vacated as it had been entered.

The adjoining room was unoccupied, but wouldn't answer.

The same of the apartment next to that.

"You volks ish mighdy bardicular, it sheems to me, all der dime mit it!" commented the janitress.

"Oh, not so very, ma'm," returned the pretty market-woman, with cheerful composure. "Light, air, and home-comfort! that is what my brothers here and I are seeking in this nice neighborhood."

"Is dem mens your brudders?" with a critical look at Luella's companions.

"Don't be so 'bardicular,' ma'm," and Luella led the way into another empty den, no less desirable than its predecessor. "It's bad for the digestion."

"You neetn't vlare oop, young womans! I didn't dake dem vor your shildrens. Haw, haw, haw!"

"What room is this?"

And Luella once more unceremoniously entered a furnished apartment—a front one this time, neatly fitted up throughout, and with many evidences of a woman's occupancy, and a woman of taste at that, though everything was inexpensive and humble.

"Gome ouf of dat!"

"Why, certainly, fraulein! But do all your tenants leave their room-doors unfastened when absent?"

"Dot leddy v'ot hazh dot abartment do, all de dimes mit it."

"A lady, eh? She might give some points as to the accommodations in this charming locality."

"Dot leddy gan't, vor she vas not in der building."

And the door was slammed to again as the intruders accomplished their exit rather leisurely.

Luella, however, here slipped into the janitress's hand a small *douceur*, that caused her stolid face to broaden and brighten, like a Flemish landscape under a mist-scattering sun and breeze.

"Who is the lady-tenant, my dear, good fraulein?"

"I ain'd a fraulein!" cried the woman, bursting into her first good-natured laugh. "Mein husband vork in dot ice-house, unt I pees a marriet womans, mit den shildrens."

"How very interesting! they must be little darlings, if they at all resemble their mother."

"You really dinks so?"

"How can you doubt it? But you haven't told me who the lady-tenant of that sweet apartment is."

"Dot ish zo. She ish Matame Lesdeur."

"Oh! and what does she do?"

"Vorks in dem zircuses py night-dime, unt, I zuspects, mit mighty vew clothes on. Zo dey dells me."

"And by day?"

"Py tay, she zuppards dem pig loafers into der pack room, I kess, or gries her eyes owid her het all py herself in dere, or meppe gets trunk v'ile waiting vor Mr. Markheim to zhow up in von or anudder of dem gorner shin-mills."

Luella felt inexpressibly shocked. Nothing could have described poor Celeste's degradation more pitifully than the German woman's terse and unfeeling characterization.

"Where is this Madame Lesteur now?" she asked.

The janitress shrugged her fat shoulders, and shook her frowsy head, though Cheese-it made a sign to indicate that he would be able to answer the question practically.

"Dere is only vun more facant room on dis vloor," volunteered the woman.

She pushed upon the lockless and latchless door of a small den, containing some sticks of furniture and a straw pallet in one corner, as she spoke.

"Dis abartment ish alretty vurnished, ash you zee," she continued, as an additional inducement; while Cheese-it made another sign, to the effect that it was this room he had been

surreptitiously occupying while keeping up his secret espionage of the last week or so. "Der vormer denant, he gommited zuicide—hangked py der neck vrom dot gross-piece in der gorner dere—unt ve zeized der vurniture vor der rent he vos owin' mit der landlort. Vot you dinks of dot abartment, young womans?"

"Quite cozy, perhaps, but—but not quite the thing, I fear."

"Ve haff udder rooms on der vloors pelow dis one—splendid abartments!"

"Never mind; we won't look at them now—we may possibly call again. You have been very kind. Here is something for your dear little 'shildrens."

"Oh, dank you, ma'm! You are von berfect leddy, efen if you don'd dress eggsagctly like von."

"Thank you!"

"Come with me," said Cheese-it, when they were once more out of the tenement. "I think I can hunt up the poor madame, though I must keep sort of shady for my own part—not being disguised as you two are."

After several unsuccessful essays, he conducted them into the private or card-room of a corner liquor-salon of somewhat better class than the others of the vile locality.

Seated at a table, with a half-emptied glass of liquor before her, her elbow on the wooden edge, her head on her hand, sat a still tastefully dressed and once beautiful woman, in a species of open-eyed stupor, and yet with a look of mingled desperation and fond anticipation in her pretty, though careworn face.

Needless to say that it was the sunken, the degradedly-infatuated Celeste Lesteur.

As the new-comers took seats at a table apart, in such manner as to hide the boy Cheese-it almost completely from view, a sort of commotion was made manifest on the further side of the partition, in the general bar-room.

"Now, I tell you what it is, Mr. Markheim!" the bartender was heard to exclaim, in a low but peremptory voice; "you're to make no disturbance with the lady in my place again. Several other customers have just stepped in there, and the respectability of this establishment has got to be preserved! You hear me?"

CHAPTER XL.

THE WAGES OF SIN.

MARKHEIM was heard to growl something in answer to the bartender's injunction, and then he strode into the private room.

Celeste's lethargy vanished, her eyes lighting up at sight of him, as she tremblingly made room for him at her side.

"Ah, ciel! I am so glad that you are back," they overheard her murmur, while discussing some refreshments they had ordered, and seeming to take no notice of the pair.

He had nodded a not altogether unkindly greeting, and then sunk abstractedly into the proffered seat, while the bartender brought them some liquor.

They then began an earnest discussion in voices that were too low and guarded to be overheard.

This was particularly disappointing to both Luella and Old Grip, since, if it should prove impracticable to convey the meditated warning to Lesteur on that day, it was all the more important to know the progress of Markheim's contemplated elopement with Olga Reisbach, and his consequent desertion or other disposition of the Frenchwoman, in the opposition she could be depended on as sure to make to the project, unless opportunely hoodwinked or silenced.

Their disappointment was speedily alleviated, however.

"Where on earth is Cheese-it?" suddenly asked Luella, in a cautious whisper.

The boy had all at once mysteriously disappeared from the corner in which he had been so snugly ensconced, as effectually as if he had melted into the air.

Old Grip looked over the table, with a momentary reflection of his companion's surprise, and then, after a glance about the room, smiled while directing her attention to the table at which Markheim and Celeste were whispering.

This was a rather large table, and coiled up underneath it, they perceived the indefatigable Cheese-it, still as a church-mouse, occupying scarcely any perceptible space, and listening with cock-eared curiosity for all he was worth.

He had quietly slipped down to the floor in his corner, wormed his way under the table at which Luella and Old Grip were still sitting, and thence across the room to his present vantage ground, and all so cleverly as not to have attracted the least attention.

"The boy is a thoroughbred!" was the detective's sole whispered comment, in response to Luella's smile and nod of gratification.

The backs of the conversing pair were partly turned to them, so that they could observe them narrowly, with little risk of detection.

The wearing suspense and poverty of the past

few weeks, it was noticed, had wrought even greater changes in Markheim than in the care-worn, infatuated woman at his side.

His powerful athletic form had become gaunt, the iron-gray in his thick hair had redoubled its area, his eyes were moody and blood-shot, there was the slight though almost constant tremor of the upper lip so often perceived in hard drinkers, and his dark, not unhandsome face was set with a discontented, savage and somewhat irresolute expression.

The detective made a slight sign to his companion, as much as to say, "Our master enemy is fast breaking up; a little patience hereafter, and he should soon be in our power."

Then they ordered some beer, as being likely the least poisonous liquid dispensed at the bar, and resigned themselves to patient waiting.

It was a somewhat longer wait than they had anticipated, but, like everything else, terminated at last.

Presently Celeste started back, with a flush in her sallow cheeks, a blaze in her black eyes.

"Are you crazy, or do you take me for an idiot?" she exclaimed, angrily.

Markheim glances at the two apparent strangers, who were just then seemingly oblivious in a deeply interested conversation of their own, and then, with a cautioning sign to his companion, seemed to be trying to explain himself, still in his guarded whisper.

"I won't listen to another word!" was the woman's angry and just audible reply. "Just you dare it, *sclerat!*"

"But after I get the money, I tell you!"

Markheim was also off his guard now.

"Oh, yes; and it's now after you have got all the money I have been able to earn!" with fierce sarcasm.

He did not reply, but ordered the tumblers replenished.

"Absinthe for me this time!" snapped Madame Lesteur, shortly, as the attendant made his appearance.

After the drinks were supplied, Markheim, instead of saying anything further, began to drum on the table with his finger-tips, while merely fastening his eyes on her face with a gloomy and inscrutable expression.

It seemed to cause the woman fear, or at least an alarming nervousness.

After emptying her glass, she fidgeted in her chair, and would have doubtless made an attempt to renew the conversation, had not Gorgo unexpectedly made his appearance at this juncture.

Celeste made a disgusted movement, while even Markheim's brows came together with a more pronounced scowl, for Gorgo was unmistakably drunk.

Gorgo in his normal condition, which was that of sobriety, was by no means a pleasing object.

Gorgo drunk, if not exactly amusing, was certainly a curiosity.

He was like an erect reptile on a spree, or an animated stove-pipe several sheets in the wind.

His long, snaky form wriggled about with odd suggestiveness; his thin, craning neck undulated like a swan's; ghoulish grins, that were meant for smiles, chased each other like little rats over his yellow, cadaverous face; and what could be seen of his sparkling, bead-like eyes were like scintillating scraps of green glass set and all but lost in sockets of time-yellowed ivory.

He seemed to have got drunk in sections, that might be taken apart and carried off in short pieces.

"What the deuce do you want?" growled Markheim, with a grim smile at last.

"Liquor, more liquor! That's what I want," was the inane, scarcely intelligible reply. "A bottle, a keg, a barrel! but more to drink, always more to drink!"

"I should say you had had enough. Where did you load up with what you've got?"

"Breezers—Bobtails—cocktails!"

And then, after a vain attempt to steady himself, he dove head-foremost into a half-barrel of sawdust, with his legs in the air, twining and twisting one over and around another, like whip-lashes.

"Come, Celeste!" said Markheim, starting up. "I'll have to take the fool home, and then we can discuss this thing at our leisure over a nice bottle all to ourselves."

He snatched up Gorgo under his arm, and strode away with him as if he had been a mere stuffed caricature of humanity, which perhaps he was in a certain sense.

Celeste followed rather hesitatingly, and the others, including Cheese-it, were close after her.

There was an interruption at the entrance, in which some policemen figured largely while dispersing a knot of scoundrels—probably "Breezers"—recently engaged in a murderous brawl among themselves.

The Frenchwoman momentarily recoiled, with a horrified exclamation.

She had almost set her foot upon the body of a young ruffian freshly stabbed through the heart; the murderer, knife in hand, being just collared by an officer in the midst of his desperate companions, scarcely three rods away.

"Come! come! come!" faltered Luella, making her escape, with her friends, by another

door. "I shall stifle if I breathe the air of this locality any longer. It is simply appalling!"

"Merely the wages of sin, and the devil paying off his own," observed the detective, philosophically.

"No reason why we should be present on pay-day, that I am aware of."

"Yes; since you are so intent on saving Celeste."

"Poor Celeste! Oh, it is terrible!"

"I see an oasis ahead. Let us make for it. Cheese-it has his disclosures to make, and it is perhaps essential he should remain on duty hereabouts."

CHAPTER XLI.

CONFERENCE.

THE oasis in this desert of crime to which the detective led the way was the pretty little East River Park, just opposite the northwestern side of Blackwell's Island, in a respectable neighborhood, and but a few blocks north of the squalid locality into which the exigencies of our narrative have compelled us to introduce the reader.

The place was comparatively deserted at this hour of the day, which was now well on into the afternoon.

The sun was bright, a refreshing breeze blew in from the broad surface of the estuary, seats were chosen with a view to eradicate the impression of the disagreeable scenes just left behind, and Luella soon began to feel something like herself again.

"Now, Cheese-it," said the detective, "now for the disclosures for which we must remain indebted to your ingenuity!"

"My ears were wide open, boss."

"What were they whispering about?"

"Markheim was unfolding to madame his plan to elope with Miss Olga."

"What! he dared propose that to Madame Lesteur."

"I should say he did, boss. That was what she was so hopping mad about toward the last, when Gorgo showed up so infernally lush. A good thing that for Mr. Markheim, too—perhaps!"

"Gorgo's interruption?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Well, he couldn't see what I could see, boss."

"What was that?"

"La Lesteur reaching down under the table, and—and—" with a rather shame-faced look at Miss Shoresby.

"Well—and what?"

"Tapping with her hand—sort of adjustin' in case of necessity-like—a nice little dagger in the top of her stocking."

"Celeste has always carried such a weapon, and in just that way," interposed Luella, gravely. "I once perceived it while she was dressing, and she half-explained the caprice to me. She is not wholly French, it seems, but half Basque, among which people it is a common custom with the women."

"Ah!" observed the detective, reflectively; "one can look for almost anything from those Pyrenean mountaineers—a moody and wild set."

"It was only for a minute," continued the boy. "Maybe she was only sort of seeing that it was all ready and handy, you know."

"Perhaps. But what excuse could Markheim present for disclosing such an intention to Celeste?"

"Maybe he was tellin' the truth. If I was a man, I'd sooner marry Frenchy than Olga Reisbach, any day in the year."

"My question, if you please!"

"When they both broke out talkin' aloud, you heard him mention 'money,' didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, that was it. He kept on swearing that he merely wanted to get hold of a pile of money that Miss Olga could skin out of her father when he was ready to elope with her."

"Ah! Well?"

"After that, he would come back for Madame Lesteur, and they would have a fine time somewhere with the boodle, leaving little Olga in the lurch."

"So! Was there anything more?"

"Nothing of consequence, boss. They kept ringin' the changes on this one chime all the time. Then madame got her back up, and flew into a passion, as you saw."

The detective drew a long breath, and looked at Luella.

"What do you think of it all?" he asked.

"I do not quite know just yet," she replied.

"It looks as if Olga would require your protecting interference quite as much as Celeste."

"You also think, then, that Markheim might have been sincere in his professions to Celeste?"

"With such an exceptionally double-dealing villain as Markheim, I don't exactly know what to believe."

"Neither do I—as yet."

Old Grip turned to Cheese-it again.

"Could you gather that Markheim has made any definite arrangements for his proposed elopement, as yet?"

"No, sir; but I should think that it was only being thought over for the present."

"Time enough, then, I fancy," and the detect-

tive arose. "It's a queer muddle, but our primary duty, it seems to me, is to save poor old Reisbach his money."

"Yes," replied Luella. "Under the circumstances that is of more real account to him, I should say, than such a daughter as Olga."

"Shall you try to warn her, too?"

"Warn Olga Reisbach! As well warn the wind or the sea-wave—especially as coming from me! Not to be thought of for an instant."

"What do you propose, then, in the complication?"

"To leave Cheese-it on duty in Slaughter Block, and then see what the next day or two shall bring forth; though, of course, we shall put Mr. Reisbach on his guard the moment we see him."

"Just what I was thinking!"

It was, therefore, so arranged, and the detective and Luella forthwith set out on their return down-town, leaving Cheese-it to resume his post on Slaughter Block.

They had scarcely taken their places in the Elevated cars, when, glancing to the opposite platform, they perceived Sorab Drubbeljah, who had apparently just got out of an up-train, and was hastening toward the street below.

"What if he should be bearing a message from Olga to Markheim?" exclaimed Luella.

"Well, go on, my dear?"

"She might be urging forward the elopement, directly upon learning of her father's absence from the city, you know."

"I have been thinking just that thing."

"What shall we do?"

"Nothing immediately. We can't forever be mixing up with other folks' muddles. You are anticipated at the Garden this afternoon, are you not?"

"Yes; though I do not perform until to-night, Borepaw will be expecting me at the ticket-office."

"And me, too. To-day's being a performance for the special delectation of the Public School children, he will want me to go through the house oftener than usual—the little ones are so apt to stray into danger among the animals. We shall be late as it is, but must first return to the hotel to get rid of these disguises."

"Of course."

"Wait! does Olga perform this afternoon?"

"No; only her mother."

"Well, if Olga shall be visible about the show, we can pretty safely set down our anxiety as premature, I think."

This course was consequently taken, and when they reached the Garden, after effecting the needful change in their attire, both felt considerably relieved at perceiving Olga with her mother in the dressing-rooms, apparently as care-free and innocent as ever before in her life.

Nevertheless, Ayettah, upon coming off from her trapeze performance, made a sign to the detective that she had something of importance to communicate.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE COMPLICATION THICKENS.

"WHAT is it, Ayettah?" asked the detective, as soon as the opportunity was afforded.

Ayettah was in her trapezing costume, setting off her fine figure to the fullest advantage, her dark face aglow with the exertions she had just been making in mid-air.

"Olga sent Sorab off with a message for Markheim less than an hour ago."

"When had Olga and Markheim finished their interview before that?"

"Oh, a considerable time before. Markheim took himself off from our rooms not long after you and I had separated on the stair."

"You were present at the conclusion of their interview?"

"Of course; I hurried back at once, and had some little embarrassment in explaining my absence."

"They still spoke together unreservedly in your presence?"

"Wholly so."

"They came to no definite arrangement, then?"

"No; but," significantly, "since then Olga learned of her father's absence from the city."

"I understand. Have you any idea of the purport of her message by Sorab?"

"No, sahib," disappointedly. "Heaven knows I wish I had."

"Well, you are proving you mean well by us, Ayettah; so still keep a sharp lookout, and let me be advised from time to time."

"That I will, sahib. There is the summons that my Nautch dance is on!"

"Don't let me detain you, then."

"One minute. You—you haven't asked Miss Shoresby about my proposition yet?"

Old Grip, with a return of his uncomfortable feeling, evaded the question.

"I have already told you distinctly, Ayettah, that you must speak for yourself."

"I sha'n't complain, sahib."

She flashed out of sight—a fleeting vision of shapeliness, tights and spangles.

Nothing else of any importance was disclosed at the afternoon performance.

Then Olga was with her mother at dinner, and they were also entertaining some German guests, so that neither Luella nor Olga could have found opportunity to communicate any suspicions or warnings to Mrs. Reisbach, even had such been thought expedient just then, which it scarcely was.

"I think we can quiet ourselves," said Luella to the detective, when starting with him for the evening performance. "Olga has preceded us with her mother, and I was careful to observe that she took her costumes with her. All will be well till we can communicate all we know to her father, later on."

"Let us hope for the best."

The "Hohenlohes," mother and daughter, opened the equestrian specialties of that evening, and were received with the accustomed applause; Mrs. Reisbach looking like an Amazonian queen as her powerful figure flashed through the brilliant evolutions of the act, and Olga so childish and gossamer-like in comparison as to excite the usual comments with regard to her fairy "innocence" and delicate beauty.

But later on, just as Luella was about to be called for her Diana-huntress-tigers'-den act, as it may be designated, Old Grip hurried up to her with a startling piece of suggestive intelligence.

Olga had mysteriously disappeared directly after her equestrian performance. Her mother was excited and uneasy, while Borepaw was in a towering rage because the double-trapeze act with which the exhibition ordinarily closed, and therefore participated in by Olga and Ayettah, would have to be excluded, with an apology to the spectators.

"It looks bad," was Luella's comment, "but don't tell Mamma Reisbach anything at present. It might only alarm her unnecessarily, besides doing her up for the rest of the evening, and she is down for yet another act. Who first noted the girl's disappearance?"

"Avettah; and she sent in word by him from the midst of her Nautch dance, in which she was then engaged."

"Ayettah is doing well."

"I should say so!"

"Could she give no particulars?"

"None."

"But Sorab is also absent."

"True; he hasn't shown up once to-night."

"Does Ayettah connect the coincidence in any way?"

"Probably; though she will not say so. She is now 'on' in the snake-charming, you must know."

Here Luella's cue was called.

She had only time to flash a gesture to the detective, and then was gone; there ensuing the usual burst of enthusiastic applause at her radiant and picturesque appearance in this specialty which her talents and past tragic circumstances had made so famous.

The detective hurried away in search of Ayettah.

He found her in the green-room, just returned from her snake-charming performance, but paler and more breathless than she should be from her exertions therein, which were nerve-trying, but not physically arduous.

"What is the matter?" he demanded.

"Oh, sahib!"

"But what has upset you?"

"This!"

She handed him a scrap of paper, containing the following unsigned scrawl:

"Suspect what you choose, but breathe but a word of your suspicions, and you will know whose vengeance will seek you out, sooner or later!"

"But this is unsigned."

"No need; it is my brother Sorab's scrawl. He knew that I would know."

"When did you get this?"

"An instant ago."

"How?"

She indicated a rude little curtained alcove, which answered as her humble dressing-room.

"It lay between the folds of my scarlet fleshings, which Sorab knew I would have to use for my very last act—as Bacchus with the harnessed leopards, you know."

"And was probably put there by Sorab before quitting the hotel with Olga's message?"

"Without a doubt, sahib."

"And at what time did Olga disappear this evening?"

"Fully an hour and a half ago; directly after the opening Amazonian act with her mother."

"The deuce! that will give them all a three-hours' start before the show winds up."

"All of that, sahib."

"That is, if the elopement-robbery is an accomplished fact, and Sorab is one of the fugitives?"

"Yes."

"What is your impression, Ayettah?"

"Alas! just that, sahib."

"Wait! I shall send a message of warning to Reisbach at once, taking the chances of his having returned direct to the hotel."

As he sprung to a little writing-desk in the corner of the green-room, and touched a signal for a district messenger, Mr. Borepaw came hustling into the place in high glee.

"Olga or no Olga, Miss Shoresby takes everything by storm!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands. "Aha! listen to that!" as the roars of applause continued. "Bestir yourself, Ayettah! or your Bacchus act will be on before you are ready." Ayettah darted into her alcove. "Where is Madame Reisbach?"

"Here, at your service!" And the great Irmgard Hohenlohe was on hand to speak for herself; while at this moment the detective finished and dispatched his message for Reisbach. "Is Black Seim in readiness?"

There was a curt nod, and she hurried off to the stables, a resplendent and heroic figure.

And so the successful business of the show proceeded to the close.

It was when the green-room was in its crowded and confused state, directly following the dismissal of the spectators, that Grimwald burst in upon the scene, his coxcomb awry, and his eyes popping out of his head.

"The devil is in Reisbach, or 'e is clean hoff 'e is 'ead!" he exclaimed.

Reisbach followed, white as chalk, staggering like a mortally-wounded man, and brandishing a bank-book over his head.

"Robbed and childless!" he hoarsely cried. "Daughter and money both gone! Oh, Irmgard, Irmgard! why did you bring to our bosoms such a serpent-child?"

CHAPTER XLIII.

"CORD AND CREESE."

MRS. REISBACH had fainted instantly on the announcement of her heart-stricken husband's disastrous news.

But Luella and Old Grip had only tarried long enough to gather some particulars of the misfortune before hurrying away, solely intent for the moment in looking after the safety of the unhappy Celeste, if some terrible doom should not have already overtaken her.

The particulars were few, but significant enough.

Olga had drawn all the money in the bank, except twenty-five dollars, on a forged order in her mother's name, probably early in the afternoon. A heartless note, announcing the fact, together with her contemplated elopement with Markheim for parts unknown, had been left with the hotel clerk for her father, that same evening, and almost immediately following her disappearance from the show.

"I almost feel guilty of neglect in not having forestalled this miserable affair in some way," explained Luella, on the way up-town. "And yet it seems we have done everything that could be done under the circumstances."

"Make yourself easy on that score," counseled the detective. "Not one outsider in five hundred would have discommoded themselves as you have done; and, as you say, the circumstances were dead against us."

"What do you apprehend now?"

"For La Lesteur?"

"Yes."

"The worst."

"The worst!"

"Yes; I can only hope that Cheese-it may not have paid for his fidelity to our interests with his life."

"Heaven forbid! But why such tragic anticipations?"

"I cannot help them."

"But Markheim, after receiving the message by Sorab, and determining upon instant elopement, might have easily slipped away from Celeste's espionage."

"Not he! Or granted, had she been on duty at the Garden; but it was her night off. She is not the woman to tamely acquiesce in her own abandonment, as we have seen, and would have watched his every movement like a hawk. Depend upon that."

Luella could find no objection to this hypothesis.

"Of course, both Gorgo and Sorab would have accompanied them in their flight," she said, after a pause.

"Yes; without a doubt. I told you of Sorab's warning to his sister."

"Truly. But what measures can they have taken for the security of their flight on such short notice, and practically in the dead of night?"

"Measures are readily taken, with one of Markheim's cleverness, and nearly eight thousand dollars to back it."

"Still, what do you think?"

"That they are off to Canada long before this, doubtless cunningly disguised, to take the first foreign steamer available."

"But of course they can be arrested, headed off by telegraph, no matter whither they have flown?"

"Certainly; and if Reisbach is too overcome to set the wires in motion, Borepaw will do it for him. Let us think of nothing but the immediate business in hand just now."

They were just quitting the Elevated train, however, when Luella exclaimed: "But our disguises—we have forgotten them!"

"No need of further concealment now," was the reply. "So much the more likely that every policeman on the beat will know me by sight and reputation."

"Even in Slaughter Block?"

"Even there."

Nevertheless, Miss Shoresby clung very closely to his arm, as they entered the dreaded and unsavory purlieus.

Slaughter Block was, as a rule, given over to even worse scenes of disorder by night than by day; and on the present occasion there were signs of exceptional excitement under way there.

Men and women were eagerly conversing in knots and groups, or hurrying up the street, and the blue uniforms and brass buttons were comfortably omnipresent to the law-abiding mind.

The detective made a sign to one of the policemen, that was understood and respected.

"Supposed to be a fire in No. 740, sir," was the reply to the inquiry that followed. "Smoke pouring out of top floor, and yet entrance is barred to it as yet."

It was the tenement in which Madame Lesteur, Markheim and Gorgo had been tenants.

A few words of explanation were sufficient to cause the policeman to hurriedly accompany Luella and Old Grip upon their errand.

The firemen had not yet been summoned, or had not arrived, and two more policemen, including a roundsman, were keeping the crowd back from the entrance.

A few additional words enabled the newcomers to pass the barrier, which they speedily did, accompanied by the first officer, who had proved to be an acquaintance of the detective's named Harbeck.

"I don't think you'll find it to be a real fire, but only something producing a stifling smoke," observed the roundsman, as they hurried by him.

At the top of the uppermost stair-flight, yet another policeman was found, surrounded by the German janitress, her husband and children, together with many of the lower floor occupants, trying to break in a stout secured door at the landing, which wholly shut off all entrance to the passage and rooms on that floor.

This he had as yet been unable to effect, without an ax, in search of which useful instrument one of the tenants had been dispatched, but had not yet returned.

"How long has the place been smoking?" demanded the detective, when his personality and the object of his visit had been made known.

"Perhaps for two or three hours, more or less," was the discouraged reply, "though the old woman here only sent notice to the station a short time ago."

"Effer zince early in the efening," cried the janitress, clasping her head distractedly. "Ride afder Mr. Markheim unt Mr. Gorgo comes running down mit de sdairs, after loggin oop der door, unt Mr. Markheim, he says do me: 'If you go pack oop dere, I'll break your Dutch neck.' Oh, mein Gott! Yawcoop, run der sdairs down unt hurry oop Gottlieb mit dot meat-axe!"

"Let me try my hand here," said the detective. "Have you called for answers from within yet?"

"Not yet," replied the officer addressed, willingly stepping aside from the stubborn barrier. "I was only just beginning at the job when you came up."

Old Grip straightway shook the door, and called upon Cheese-it's name in his clear, incisive voice.

A faint, muffled sound from far within came back in response.

Then the detective retired as far as the landing-space would admit, and hurled himself against the door with prodigious violence.

Torn from its lock and hinges, it gave way, and the entrance was effected.

A lot of smoldering rags, which had caused all the smoke, was heaped against the door of one of the smaller rooms, which proved to be locked on the outside.

On the fire being speedily trampled out, and the door opened, there was a louder, but still half-strangled cry from within.

Then Cheese-it staggered out, gasping and blinded with the noxious smoke, one of Gorgo's Malay creeses in his grasp.

CHAPTER XLIV.

FOOTPRINTS OF CRIME.

As Cheese-it made his appearance in this unexpected and deplorable guise, Luella, who had followed with the detective and the few others into the passage—one of the policemen standing guard against a promiscuous rush—caught him in her arms, or he would have fallen.

The boy struggled to keep himself erect with her support, and pointed to Madame Lesteur's door.

"In there! in there!" was all he could say.

The detective motioned her back, and then entered the apartment indicated, with one of the officers.

They came quickly out again.

"No, no!" muttered Old Grip, barring the way to Luella. "You must not look in there. All is over with her—let that content you."

But, woman-like, notwithstanding that the color had wholly deserted her face, she thrust past him.

Then she stood, momentarily petrified, on the fatal threshold.

Poor Celeste!

Her inexplicable infatuation was ended at last.

She was quite dead and cold, the deadly strangling-cord of the Javanese thug about her neck.

Half an hour later, at the police station, Cheese-it was sufficiently recovered to state what he knew of the tragedy.

At an early hour of the evening, it seemed, Markheim, Gorgo and Sorab had made their appearance in the den tenanted by the first-named pair.

Madame Lesteur was in her own room, apparently in a silent and defiant frame of mind, and the boy himself secretly on the watch from the little room, formerly occupied by the suicide already alluded to, in which he had been accustomed to secrete himself.

Presently Sorab was sent away, and, after a whispered conference with Gorgo, which the boy could not overhear, Markheim had unceremoniously entered Madame Lesteur's room.

There he had abruptly announced that his elopement with Olga Reisbach was on the point of being carried out, without an hour's delay.

Celeste had listened, to use Cheese-it's own words, "with a white face, but the eyes of a devil."

Then he had coolly demanded to know if she had decided to acquiesce in the matter, and to give her oath to cause no interruption whatever.

For answer, Celeste had suddenly produced the dagger from her stocking, and, with no sound save the frenzied gnashing of her teeth, precipitated herself like a tigress upon her insolent insulter.

Markheim had saved himself from the avenging poniard only with the utmost difficulty, while calling upon Gorgo to come and "do her up."

Gorgo had instantly obeyed the summons, a creese in one hand, a cord in the other.

"Not the knife—not the knife, but the other!" Markheim had exclaimed, while still battling with the infuriated woman.

Then Gorgo had dropped the creese, throwing the cord about Celeste's neck, and she was almost instantly powerless in their murderous hands.

Then Cheese-it could stand it as a secret spectator no longer.

He had burst from his place of concealment, and, snatching up the fallen creese, had essayed his utmost in behalf of the unfortunate woman thus being so ruthlessly assassinated before his eyes.

His utmost, however, had been but little, as against such desperate ruffians; though he was positive of having given Gorgo a stab in the hand before being hurled back.

Then Markheim, with a roar of rage at recognizing the boy's identity, had flung him back into the den from which he had emerged, and, without taking the trouble to disarm him, had secured the door on the outside.

From the deathlike silence that had ensued Cheese-it had been convinced that the murder of Celeste had been accomplished.

He had, accordingly, held his breath, doubting not that his turn would come next, but resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible.

But this was not to be.

He presently became aware of stealthy movements and unintelligible whispers on the part of the two villains in the passage and among the different rooms.

Then, after a considerable pause, he began to sniff a smoke coming into his prison-den through the narrow fanlight over the door; after which he heard the men pass out of the strong main door at the landing and lock it after them.

The boy was not long in understanding the *finale* of this murderous plot, which was "to smoke him to death," to use his own words, as the quietest mode of getting rid of so troublesome an eye-witness to what had been perpetrated.

He was fast choking, and on the point of losing his senses altogether, when the entrance of the rescuers had brought relief.

Such was the substance of the devoted lad's statement, and as such, with the customary expansion and embroidery, it was destined to appear in the next morning's newspapers for the especial delectation of a horrified public.

After receiving a promise from the sergeant in charge that the remains of the unfortunate Celeste should be placed in charge of a respectable undertaker, directly following upon the inevitable inquest, and at Miss Shoresby's expense, the trio lost no time in quitting the station-house and returning to the hotel.

Here, as all were more or less exhausted with the successive excitements and adventures of that eventful day, they speedily sought sleep and rest.

In spite of the late night-hours necessitated by her profession, Luella was ordinarily an early riser.

But it was nearly nine o'clock on the following morning when she awoke to the shuddering recollection of the incidents of the preceding day.

"Polly!"

"Yessum!"

And the faithful Mrs. Grimwald was quickly at her bedside.

"Do you know how poor Mr. and Mrs. Reisbach have passed the night?"

"Bad, ma'm; hawfully bad. I doubt if heither of 'em 'ave slept a wink, ma'm."

"What has been done about the elopement? You ought to know from your husband by this time."

"Yessum."

"What has been done?"

"Oh, Mr. Borepaw 'as been a-hadvisin' the police hall hover the country, ma'm."

"With what effect?"

"I 'aven't 'eard, ma'm."

"When did you see Mr. Grippon?"

"I was hat the houter door ten minutes ago, ma'm."

"What to say?"

"That if you didn't hawake within 'alf an hour, ma'm—but I wasn't to harouse you on no haccount wathever—he'd 'ave to be hoff for Boston without seeing you."

"For Boston?"

"Yessum."

"What can he be going to Boston for?"

"I 'aven't the least hidea, ma'm."

"Help me to dress at once!"

Luella staggered a little as she rose, but was soon herself again, and had just completed a hasty toilette, with Polly's assistance, when the detective appeared.

"You are going to Boston, Polly tells me?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Almost instantly."

"What for?"

He placed a telegram in her hands.

CHAPTER XLV.

A LAST CARD, BUT A LOSING ONE.

It was a dispatch, freshly received by Mr. Borepaw from the chief of the Boston police, who had been communicated with, together with many others in like authority in other cities, as to the eloping party.

Three men and a young woman, answering the descriptions sent out, had just registered for passage to the Canary Islands, *et al.*, and the vessel was on the point of sailing. Still, there was no justification as yet for the arrest or detention of the party. Could some one come on at once, at the risk of arriving in time, and attempt the identification?

Such was the tenor of the dispatch.

Luella held out her hand.

"You will be back soon?"

"To-night, in any event."

The detective kissed the hand, then her lips, and was gone.

Luella's night's rest had been broken and unnatural.

After eating some breakfast, she lay down again, and after Mrs. Grimwald had refreshed and darkened the room, was presently enjoying something of the repose that had been denied her.

It was once more a Saturday, and the pleasing consciousness that she would have to appear in but one more public performance before indulging in the long Sunday's rest and recuperation, added not a little to the sense of comparative satisfaction with which she gradually drowsed off into oblivion.

When she awoke, several hours later, a soft, cool hand was being gently passed over her brow.

"That is very soothing, Polly," she murmured. "Keep on doing it, please."

There was a timid, inarticulate response, and then she perceived that it was not Mrs. Grimwald, but the Nautch girl, Ayettah.

"How happens it you are here, Ayettah?" asked Luella, kindly.

"I ventured in, and Mrs. Grimwald was gone. So I—I ventured to stay, ma'm."

After a moment's reflection, Luella decided that it were better to have an unmistakable understanding with the strange young woman at once.

"Raise the blind, so that we shall have a little more light," she said. "Then come back; I wish to talk with you, my dear."

The girl silently obeyed, an odd mixture of hope and suspense showing in her fathomless eyes.

Propping her form into an easier attitude for conversing, Luella took her hand.

"Mr. Grippon has told me everything that passed between you and him, Ayettah."

"Everything?" a rich blush dyeing the bronze cheeks, and yet with an eager look.

"Everything. And now I suppose you are come for my answer to your strange proposition?"

Ayettah silently bowed her head, and lowered her eyes.

"Perhaps you are not exactly crazy, but only eccentric, Ayettah."

No answer, save for a slight tremor of the hand Luella was holding.

"But very exceptionally eccentric, indeed, I should say," continued Luella, her voice becoming slightly irritable, in spite of herself. "Otherwise you could scarcely entertain in your own mind such an astounding proposition as you made to my betrothed husband."

Still no answer.

"Why, I never heard of such a thing—not any one else, I fancy! It is simply outlandish!"

Ayettah suddenly threw herself on her knees at the side of the bed.

"Oh, I love him, love him!" she cried, wildly.

"Do not think I shall ever try to interfere with your love for him. Enough for me to be near him, to silently breathe the air he breathes. Only take me with you after you are married! I will be your handmaid, your drudge, your veriest slave!"

Luella's stock of patience proved less than she had anticipated; otherwise, she could have scarcely been a true woman, perhaps.

"Preposterous!" she exclaimed, half-angrily. "Never think or speak of such a crazy thing again!"

"But why, but why?"

"Enough! Don't force me, Ayettah, to have a worse opinion than you perhaps deserve."

"Ah! but could I not love him, in silence, in despair?"

"No more, I tell you!"

Then, as the girl once more stretched forth her clasped hands in a continue appeal, Luella could not refrain from bursting into a harsh laugh.

"Go!" she cried. "Perhaps you are more knave than fool, for all I know. But, at all events, go!"

Ayettah had risen slowly to her feet, a strange hopelessness in her face and eyes.

With a broken, submissive air, she was retreating into the adjoining and lighter room, when Luella impulsively rose and seized her two hands.

"Don't think me too harsh, Ayettah. Come what may, you shall count on me as your friend, your protectress. But never, never think of this absurd thing again!"

"I shall not," was the brokenly murmured reply. "It is over."

"Come, that is well; that is more worthy of you!" said Luella, with a return of all her native kindness.

Before she could know of the intention, Ayettah had seized her in her arms and planted a wildly passionate kiss upon her lips.

"This for him!" she cried, with despairing energy.

Then she was gone.

"I can't for the life of me understand it!" repeated Miss Shoresby to herself, while thinking the strange interview over for perhaps the hundredth time subsequently. "But most assuredly if all the Hindu young women are at all like Ayettah Drubbeljah, a good-looking Hindu gentleman must have a queer household about him after marrying the lady of his choice."

That night at the show, she was just about to go "on" in the tigers'-den act when Old Grip reappeared.

He shook his head, indicating that the Boston trip had been without satisfactory result.

"There is a good chance, though, that you shall know of presently," he said.

Then, with a wave of the hand, she had flashed into the public gaze in her ever-desired, unsurpassed Diana impersonation.

Luella seemed to surpass herself that evening.

The fierce yellow-and-black-striped beasts bounded here and there like tame cats, or crouched submissively, at her bidding, at the merest beck of her hand or eye, as she moved among them like a goddess of old, her ravishing form scintillating in the costume that displayed its superb proportions to the noblest advantage, a smile on her lips, a dash of color in the purity of her blonde face, her blue eyes dancing with excitement, and the jeweled silver crescent sparkling over her fair brow and amid the rich golden luxuriance of her partly unbound hair, a radiant emblem of the chaste huntress queen.

The spectators were in a frenzy of delight, and even the majority of the *attachés* of the show, including her detective-lover, were crowding from all sides to enjoy her triumph.

"Miss Shoresby is simply stupendous, my dear boy!" exclaimed Mr. Borepaw, in Old Grip's ear. "'Immense' is no longer the fitting adjective for her. By Jupiter! I fancy the question of a permanent show being self-supporting in New York is about settled this time. We'll be rich! the money is just snowing in every day and night."

Luella's act was finished. She was now outside and before the bars of the den, bowing and smiling her acknowledgments, the pelting bouquets tumbling around her.

Suddenly all this was changed; a cry of horror rising from the spectators, while every gaze was once more centered on the tigers behind her.

A darkly handsome young woman in the costume of a trapeze performer, had just somehow sprung surreptitiously into the cage, securing the trap-entrance behind her; and the sav-

age beasts, relieved from the hated thralldom of the taming eye, were already crouching for their devouring spring.

Luella turned in a flash, and at the same instant the detective and others of the show people rushed forward.

But the intruder upon the tigers was evidently bent on dying among them.

It was Ayettah.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ON THE TRAIL.

THIS frightful situation could have but one ending, and that was speedily at hand.

Luella had sprung to the trap-entrance, but only to find it secured on the inside; and before the showmen, under the detective's directions, could fairly get in their prodding work through the bars of the den, Ayettah was injured beyond recovery by the fierce beasts.

When they got her out and into the green-room at last, the surgeon, who had been called in from among the spectators, could only shake his head hopelessly.

The girl's shoulder had been terribly crushed, and only a light shawl, thrown over her figure, concealed a mortal laceration of the throat.

She reached out her hand and took the detective's.

Then, with a faint smile, and a mute request in her fading but still mysterious eyes, she looked at Luella.

The latter bowed her head.

The dying Nautch girl drew the detective down toward her, imprinted a kiss upon his forehead, and was dead.

An hour or two later, Luella, the detective, Mr. Borepaw and Mr. Reisbach were in earnest conference in the little parlor of the former's suite of rooms.

"The vessel had sailed when you reached Boston, then?" demanded Mr. Borepaw of the detective.

"It had."

"With the fugitives aboard?"

"With the party supposed by the Boston chief of police to be our fugitives on board—yes."

"Ah! a mistake, then?"

And both Reisbach and Luella also brightened up.

"Yes, or rather, a very clever trick of Markheim's devising that has, fortunately, mis-carried."

"A trick?"

"Yes."

"Explain, please."

"Sorab had gone on to Boston alone at the outset of the elopement, of course at Markheim's instance."

"The steamer had been advertised to sail on the following day. Luck favored the Hindu singularly."

"A party of four, three men and a young woman—petite, pretty and the daughter of one of the men, the two others being her cousins—were discovered at the steamship office by Markheim's emissary."

"They were hard-working Alsatians from the back country, with the intention of revisiting their native land by the freight-steamer advertised for sailing; taking no account of the long and roundabout course, by reason of the cheapness of the fare; but had been robbed of their passage money, and were in despair."

"Sorab made their acquaintance, mastered the situation and converted it into his opportunity."

"He had doubtless been provided by Markheim with some of the stolen funds for just such a purpose."

"At all events, he offered to pay their fare, on condition of their registering on the passenger lists under such names as he should suggest. The offer was accepted, doubtless with eagerness, the names registered being nothing less than rude transpositions of the orthography of the true names belonging to our fugitives."

"Thus one man registered as Keimharm (Markheim); another as Gorog (Gorgo); the third as Barsoh (Sorab); and the girl as Aglaia Keimmark (Olga Markheim)."

"A transparent enough trick, perhaps; but enough to mislead pursuit for the time being, as we have seen; and, after perpetrating it, and putting the strangers on board the steamer, Sorab had instantly disappeared, as a matter of course."

"Ten minutes' inspection at the steamship office was sufficient to open my eyes to the deception."

"So, then!" cried Reisbach, despairingly, "we are still off the trail of the real fugitives—the accursed villains who have run off with my daughter and my money?"

The detective smiled.

"Not so fast, Papa Reisbach! On the contrary, we are on the trail, hot—that is, I am."

As he spoke he produced a slip of writing, which was eagerly inspected by his companions, to the following effect:

"Remember: after Boston the woods of Sandy Hook Point, and without a moment's delay. The skipper of the Jibaway has been seen, and will take us up from there at turn of tide, to-morrow (the 9th) at daybreak."

"Markheim's own handwriting," cheerfully elucidated the detective, while returning the slip to his pocket, "and inadvertently dropped on the floor of the Boston shipping office by Sorab—probably out of his pocketbook, and in the act of paying the fares of his bogus elopers."

"By Jupiter! but you're a brick of a detective, Grippe," exclaimed Borepaw, slapping his thigh; while Reisbach was scarcely less jubilant, and Luella merely eyed her lover with a silent kindling of her blue eyes. "If I could do your sort of work, I'd abandon the show business, and grow rich in no time."

"Don't be too sure," replied the detective, quietly. "It's every man to his trade, you know."

"But the 9th at daybreak—that's this coming morning!" cried Reisbach.

"Yes."

"How shall we intercept the scoundrels?"

"That can and must be arranged at once."

"But how? There's no train to Sandy Hook at this unconscionable hour, and this will-o'-the wisp Jibaway—"

"A staunch schooner—a fruitier in the Mediterranean trade, Jabez Schofield, master—now awaiting the ebb tide at Coenties Slip."

"The deuce!" cried Borepaw; "how have you discovered all this?"

"Partly by accident, partly by industrious and timely inquiries at the Barge Office, where, of course, I am well known, and among shipping-lists elsewhere."

"Have you visited the schooner, then?"

"Yes; just prior to my return to the Garden. The skipper was not expected on board till an hour before sailing. That," consulting his watch, and hastily rising, "is just about now, and there is no time to lose. Cheese-it and a harbor policeman accompany me."

"By Jove, so do I!" exclaimed Borepaw, jumping up, and seizing his hat.

Reisbach imitated his example, his eyes sparkling with anticipative wrath and vengeance.

"I almost wish it were a woman's place to go, too," said Luella. "You would not find me backward, I can tell you!"

Old Grip advanced, with extended hand.

She agreeably surprised him by an action, never vouchsafed before in the presence of witnesses.

Instead of accepting his hand, she promptly arose, and, with a lovely blush, presented her lips instead.

"You needn't laugh, nor cough behind your hand, Mr. Borepaw!" she cried, composedly. "All the world may know it now."

The three men, accompanied by Cheese-it and the officer, reached the schooner's dock just as she was casting off preparatory to being towed, and unceremoniously boarded her.

Skipper Jabez Schofield was no little surprised and bewildered at being summarily invited to a conference in his own cabin by the five intruders.

"What the thunder do you chaps want?" he managed to demand at last.

"Free passage on this schooner to Sandy Hook Point," replied the detective, looking him steadily in the eyes.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

The skipper of the Jibaway was a resolute, sturdy sort of fellow, but his eyes fell somewhat guiltily in response to the detective's significant words and glance.

However, he quickly bridled up a bit.

"I don't take passengers," he growled.

"You'll take us!"

"The deuce I will!"

"Yes; or at once stand your chances on a charge of conspiring in the escape of criminals from these shores."

"Criminals!"

"Yes; the men you have bargained to take on at Sandy Hook, and whom we are intent on running down, are murderers and robbers—fugitives from justice."

"By Jingo, mister!" with evident sincerity; "I hadn't an idea of all this."

"Why, then, did you consent to such a suspicious and underhanded arrangement for spirit-ing them away?"

"Well, you see," scratching his head, "the young lady was along with the two chaps that hunted me out, and made the dicker with me. I own I didn't like their looks. But then the young lady was so sweet and innocent-like—just as sweet and fairy-like as the daughter of my own, that I'm leaving down at Nantucket. You understand? What's more, the young lady was the one that over-persuaded me at last. For when she began to tell me, with the big tears in her eyes, about the brutal father and sordid mother she was eloping from with the poor but hard-working man of her heart—"

"That will do!" interrupted the detective, hastily. "We accept the explanation of your motives."

It was about time, for poor Papa Reisbach—than whom a kinder or more indulgent parent never lived—was already beginning to break down.

"Be you chaps authorized?" asked the skipper.

Old Grip pointed to the policeman's uniform, mentioned his own name, and vouchsafed some general explanations that could not but be found satisfactory.

"Oh, it's all right, I reckon," admitted the Jibaway's master at last. "I won't stand in your way, as a matter of course. But then, you see, I took that crowd's passage money in good faith, and—well, dang-ding it all! I think I deserve to keep it."

"Surely not, if it should prove part of the stolen money!"

"P'raps not," reluctantly.

"Where did you engage to carry them to?"

"Smyrna."

"And how much were you paid?"

"A cool hundred a head—four hundred, in all."

Here Mr. Borepaw, who was subject to fits of off-handed generosity, interposed.

"Look here," said he. "Let this man assist us his utmost in capturing the scoundrels and he may keep the passage-money, which he seems to have taken in good faith enough and without any suspicion of its having been stolen. I'll make it up to Reisbach here."

"Done!" shouted Skipper Jabez Schofield, with cheerful and enthusiastic energy.

And he not only insisted on grasping each man's hand on the spot, but dived into a locker and began to set out a bottle and glasses with the most hilarious dispatch.

When they returned on deck the Jibaway was well out in the stream in the wake of her straining, puffing little tug.

The wind was favorable, though light, and Schofield knew the harbor like a chart, having served his time as a New York pilot in the earlier stages of his seafaring career.

Outside Governor's Island, good-by was said to the tug, and, shaking out her white wings to the land-breeze, the Jibaway began to skim her way to the Narrows with a keen prow and a sliding keel.

In order to enhance the skipper's zeal in the changed situation, it was thought advisable to enlighten his understanding to a certain degree respecting the character of the wayward Olga's companion-fugitives.

The detective performed this task with no little effectiveness.

He had hardly got through more than half his characterization of Markheim and Gorgo, together with his sketch of their antecedents, so far as he knew them, when Captain Jabez excitedly interrupted him.

"Oh, blast my buttons and coat-tails!" cried the skipper, striking his forehead with his clinched hand; "why didn't I recall them two fellers' faces when they first showed up, along with the little gal?"

"What! you had met them before?"

"Holy mackerel! I should say so. Let's all take another snorter! It's all growing as clear as mud now, as you pictur' em."

"When and where did you chance to meet them?"

"At Madras, four years ago. They were sort of serpent and wild animal collectors."

"That has continued to be their business until very recently."

"You don't say so! You see, they had kicked up quite a muss on the Coromandel Coast at about that time."

"Gorgo—how easily that outlandish name comes to mind now—was a Java-man, and had been followed up from Batavia by a Dutch man-of-war, on suspicion of having been connected with Acheen pirates; and, besides that, he was suspected of being a professional chug."

"Thug."

"That's more like it—one of them sneaking, murdering fanatics, who practice assassination, chiefly by strangling, I believe, and out of a kind of religious frenzy, no less than for robbery."

"That's about it; and Mr. Gorgo, according to recent developments, has not essentially changed his predilections."

"Shouldn't think he would. Well, Markheim, who seemed to be pretty well-fixed, put up for the yellow man, got him a good native lawyer, and so complicated the case that the English authorities wouldn't exactly give him up to the Dutchmen, though continuing to keep him in limbo—as a sort of safeguard against possibilities, or for their own protection, I reckon."

"But just about this time, when Mr. Markheim was in high feather, along comes an unexpected slap at him, cutting his comb quicker'n a wink."

"A Parsee merchant suddenly shows up from down in Ceylon, accusing Markheim of having betrayed and murdered his daughter."

"And no sooner is Markheim in jail for this than an Englishwoman turns up from one of the lowest sailor-dens along the sea-front, claiming that he had married and deserted her in Liverpool three years before, and suing him for non-support."

"Yes, by jingo! and proving it on him, too. I can recollect that much, on account of the scandalizin' rumpus it kicked up; for up to that

time he had been cutting shins in pretty good British society along the coast."

Reisbach had fallen back in his chair, haggard and aghast, his untouched glass before him.

"Heavens and earth!" he murmured; "a married man already, too! My child, my miserable Olga!"

The skipper undertook to make amends for his awkwardness.

"Oh," he said, consolingly, "but he may have murdered that one, too, you know, and long ago?"

"What was the upshot of the Madras affair?" demanded Borepaw.

"I don't know. They were still in their pickle when I sailed away."

They went on deck again.

The Narrows had been passed; the first hints of a new day were streaking the east; and the low-lying, crooked and pine-forested elbow of Sandy Hook was in sight.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SANDY HOOK.

THE inner lightship was passed. Then as the day-beams grew apace, and the Jibaway sped easily over the leaping white-caps of the lower bay, they began to distinguish the fort and other objects on the sandy terminus of the Hook with considerable clearness.

"What is that tall gallows-looking arrangement, well in by the trees, a considerable distance this side the fortification?" asked Old Grip.

He was making his observations through an excellent sea-glass, with which, saving the skipper, he alone of the party had thought of providing himself.

"That's one of the derricks they started to build a sea-wall with some years ago, but gave up as unnecessary," replied the skipper.

"And at what point are you expected to land for the parties?"

"Along the beach a little beyond the derrick there, and where you see the pines come pretty close down to the surf. May I inquire why you ask so particularly, sir?"

"I shall explain later on. It has just struck me, however, that the gallows-looking derrick might possibly be played off for what it only resembles—a real gallows-tree."

"Sho!"

"Yes; that is, if the expectant fugitives should not yet have had an opportunity to examine the thing very closely."

"That isn't very likely, sir; for they were only expecting to be in waiting for me thereabouts after midnight."

The detective was satisfied to observe that at least Borepaw and Reisbach understood his drift.

"Why did Markheim designate that special spot for you to take them on board?" he continued.

"It's nearly half a mile from the fort grounds, with a good-sized hillock between, you'll notice, sir."

"Ah, I understand."

Here Borepaw, who had borrowed the skipper's glass, suddenly exclaimed:

"Hallo! I see 'em now. There they are, well back against the timber, and apparently watching us like hawks. But there are more than four in the party, though I can distinguish Olga's gown. Six, seven, eight—why, there's at least a dozen of 'em!"

The skipper took back the glass somewhat uneasily, while the detective, with his own still leveled, muttered a verification of Borepaw's words.

"By Crimminy! but that's so," cried Schofield. "I don't like that."

"How do you explain the addition to their numbers?" inquired the detective, coolly.

"Well, you see, sir, some of these all-the-year-round fishermen down here on the Hook are often a mighty ornery and desperate set."

"I know that."

"Their grandfathers afore 'em were wreckers and smugglers, it is said."

"True enough."

"And it's safe enough to set down some of these chaps, their descendants, as just as bad in an emergency, you know."

"True, again."

"Well, sir, what mightn't the money of a chap like Markheim effect, if lavished among such a gang of shore-pirates, 'specially if he had taken it into his head to secure himself against the possible treachery on my part—against just the sort of trick I am about to play him, in fact."

"Make yourself easy, captain," counseled the detective, calmly. "In addition to our having the law with us, my friends and I are not unaccustomed to hard knocks."

"Not much!" chimed in Cheese-it, who was examining his huge revolver, which looked ludicrously disproportioned to his own size, though he was by no means a tyro in its use. "I ask nothing better than to get a crack at the two big villains who tried to smoke me to death after murdering poor Madame Lesteur."

"Yes; the captain can make himself easy," spoke up the harbor patrolman—a big, sturdy veteran, named Renshaw—twirling his locust.

"It won't be the first bout I've had with these Hookers and Sand-Hillers, and I never yet knew them for anything but skulkers and cowards after the first brush or two."

"You hear that, captain?" cried Borepaw, slapping the skipper on the back. "We're near the offing, are we not?"

"Just about there, sir."

"Now for some of your sailors' duds, then, to conceal our identity till close upon the scoundrels!" interposed the detective. "Then lower away, and let us be in for it."

This was accordingly done, and with dispatch.

The schooner was brought-to in the offing, about a mile from shore, with her sails clewed up.

Five minutes later, and ere the sun had risen, the schooner's long boat was being pulled in by two sailors, with Skipper Jabez at the tiller-lines and the five scoundrel-seekers for passengers, the latter in their shirt-sleeves or wearing old pea-jackets, and with borrowed tarpaulins pulled down over their eyes.

"A possible hitch just sort of strikes me," suddenly observed the skipper, soon after the Jibaway's side had been left astern.

"What is that?" demanded Old Grip.

"I was to take on, not to land any passengers here, you know."

"The deuce! yes."

"Well, how will them chaps and the gal waiting for us account for so many unnecessary men in the boat here, without taking the alarm?"

"I wish we had thought of lying down under the thwarts," growled the detective. "But they must have distinguished our numbers before this, even without a glass."

"The more the merrier, and it's past mending now," observed Mr. Borepaw, with his accustomed optimism. "We'll have 'em somehow; I feel it in my bones."

"Yes," supplemented Renshaw, "and I know every rod of the sand-pines, should they take to the woods; while we mustn't forget that the fort has telegraph connections all along the Hook and coast."

"I counsel silence," advised Reisbach. "At all events, only five or six are already coming down to the beach to meet us. Yes; there is Olga herself; and I recognize that hound, Markheim, too!"

He ground his teeth, and yet his eyes were overflowing.

It was now perceived that four of the persons approaching the beach were the fugitives sought, while the fifth was a tall, gaunt man, who was carrying something that might prove a shotgun.

They appeared to be very wary and suspicious, however; while, grouped further back at the edge of the trees, there could be seen seven or eight ill-kempt but watchful-looking men, who might turn out to be tough customers at a pinch.

However, something like fresh confidence seemed to be restored among them as Captain Schofield waved his hand encouragingly from the long-boat's stern sheets, and in the mean time the oarsmen were giving way with a will, in order to beach the keel as high as might be at the first rush through the short surf.

At last there was a heave, a dip, a shower of spray, a graduated thud or shock, and she was beached.

The skipper of the Jibaway believed in wholesale treachery, or in none at all.

He was the first one out of the boat, with extended hand and a welcoming smile; the disguised men following more leisurely, and with their backs turned to the beach.

"What's the meaning of all this?" cried Markheim, advancing still suspiciously. "Who are these men?"

Here there was a shout from the detective, and, wheeling in their tracks, "those men" were rushing upon him and his party, like an incoming breaker.

Only Sorab and Olga were made captives at the first rush, however; Markheim, Gorgo and the stranger succeeding in taking to their heels betimes, and turning to fire as they ran.

CHAPTER XLIX.

VILLAINS AT BAY.

So the ruse of the attacking party had only been half successful at the outset, after all.

Not even that, perhaps; for in spite of the depletion of the original fugitives by the capture of Sorab, Reisbach was too much occupied with clasping the unrepentant Olga in his arms and weeping over her—little enough to her taste apparently; while both Markheim and Gorgo had succeeded in rejoining their Hooker friends at the timber-skirt; whence, in addition to profanity, they were pouring out the contents of their revolvers and shotguns, with a fair chance of hitting somebody, sooner or later.

"By Cracky!" cried the captain of the Jibaway, who had dropped down behind the long-boat's prow, where he was companioned by Borepaw, and was beginning to pop away quite cheerily in response to the firing from behind the gunwale; "I don't like this a dollar's worth, and would give my schooner's cargo to be well out of it."

Even Old Grip, who was retaining a grasp on

Sorab's collar, was momentarily discouraged, till he heard a signal from the policeman, Renshaw, who had suddenly crouched behind a convenient sand-hillock.

"Hist!" called out the latter. "Let the boy accompany me."

"What do you purpose doing?" asked the detective, signing Cheese-it to do as was requested.

"Executing a flank movement," was the reply. "As soon as you get on to our attack on their rear, charge 'em front-face, even if you have to do it single-handed."

Old Grip nodded, and man and boy, crouching low, rapidly glided out of sight toward the narrower strip of woods nearer the fort.

At the same time, the detective, after cautioning the cowardly Sorab against any attempt to escape, took steady aim with his revolver, and delivered his first shot.

The distance was considerable, but he had the satisfaction of seeing Markheim stagger back, and then limp further back into the wood, as if hit in the leg or foot.

"Don't waste any more shots at present, Mr. Borepaw," he then advised. "It's nearer three than two hundred yards, and Markheim isn't the man to leave the girl in our hands, without a last effort at close quarters."

"But, dang it all! it isn't bad fun as it stands," responded the show-proprietor, with a farewell shot. "Reisbach, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" he added, with no little indignation.

"Ashamed! Ain't I, though, Borepaw?" half sobbed the repulsed and wronged parent, while Olga taunted him with a heartless laugh. "My God! only look how she treats me, her own father!"

"That's just it!" roared Borepaw, furiously. "Instead of trying to wheedle and chick-a-biddy such an infernal little thief and ingrate, you should begin now by thrashing her within an inch of her life. You can send her into a convent or a reformatory at your leisure."

"He won't dare, nor you neither!" cried Olga, defiantly. "Why don't you get up from behind that boat, Papa Borepaw?"

At the same time there was a suggestion of secret bitterness in her defiant manner, the bearing of all the men, with the single exception of her poor old father, was so undisguisedly contemptuous.

"Let the young woman drop—you can't do nothin' with such a gal!" suggested Captain Jabez, from his coign of advantage. "Might as well try to sweeten a fall pippin what's rotten at the seed-core. Dang my buttons! if my little darter—God forgive me for even thinking of her in such a woman's presence!—should show up so depraved as this critter, I'd wring her neck with no more compunction than a spring-chicken's."

This evoked only another hard laugh from the unconscionable girl, while her father could only sob and wring his hands.

"I hope you fellows," said the detective, with a glance at the boat, "will have spunk enough to charge the gang with me when the signal sounds. Come out of that, anyway; they've about stopped their firing, useless as it was."

"By Jupiter! I'm with you, Grippon, old man," responded Mr. Borepaw, who had been reloading his revolver; and was at the detective's side in an instant.

"I, too, by the meetin'-house steeple!" cried the skipper, following his example. "It sha'n't be said that Jabez Schofield hung fire in a virtuous scrimmage! Come on, boys!" to the men at the oars; "it's everybody's rumpus."

Two of the sailors obeyed, retaining their oars as weapons, while the two others kept their places.

"This is something like!" observed the showman, cheerfully. "If we don't wipe out that dirty gang at the first jump we ought to be fed to hyenas."

But at this instant the long-distance firing, on the part of Markheim and his adherents, was resumed, probably as a cover for some more desperate move.

Simultaneously there was an exclamation from Olga. She had staggered, and blood was seen discolored the handkerchief that she pressed to her left shoulder.

"I'm wounded!" she said, faintly, as her father once more threw his arms about her. "One of the random or spent balls, I suppose."

At this juncture, there was the sound of yet more distant shots, together with a double-shot burrah, and the ruffians were seen to be thrown into a sudden panic.

"Come on!" shouted the detective, instantly heading the charge up from the boats, while driving the terrified Sorab before him at the muzzle of the revolver. "It is Renshaw's signal."

The call was responded to with considerable gallantry.

When half the distance had been covered Sorab gave a scream, and then, stumbling on his face, lay motionless.

The detective only paused long enough to perceive that the wretch was dead, with a bullet in the forehead, and then pressed on.

The ruffians were now in the utmost con-

fusion, for Cheese-it was popping away at their rear from the thicker woods behind their position, while Renshaw was already in their midst, cracking heads with his locust right and left, with a true policeman's scorn for any other weapon in a crowd.

As Old Grip and his companions charged among them, the fishermen contingent broke and fled.

Markheim was with his back to a tree, like a wolf at bay, wounded in the foot, and making ineffectual efforts to reload his revolver.

He was summarily knocked down and secured.

Gorgo, giving way to a sudden access of fear, had fallen to his knees, and was wringing his hands, his teeth chattering in an agony of supplication.

His revolver and cheese—the latter, perhaps, the very last specimen of his unique armory in this line—were on the ground before him.

"Get up!" growled the detective, administering an effective kick, after snapping a pair of Renshaw's iron bracelets on the monster's wrists. "The rope is dangling for you this instant, and without the formula of judge or jury."

A panic-stricken screech was the response.

"As for you," continued the detective, turning to the manacled Markheim, "you can have the satisfaction of knowing that your last long-distance shot found its billet in the miserable girl companion of your flight—in Olga Reisbach's breast!"

Markheim's swarthy face paled for an instant, but that was all.

He had evidently come to the conclusion that his desperate game was at last terminated, and was resolved to meet his fate in silence and without complaint.

The detective had already preconcerted with his friends a last *ruse* that he was about to practice, chiefly with the view of extracting a confession from Gorgo.

"Fetch them along!" he cried. "Courts of justice too often miscarry with such fiends. It shall be a short shrift and a ready noose in their case."

Dragging Gorgo with him, he led the way over some hillocks in the direction of the gallows-resembling structure.

As soon as the latter was visible it became evident that both captives perceived it for the first time.

Gorgo instantly set up a shrill howl, while Markheim set his teeth hard.

The individuals who had been left at the boat were already at the derrick, together with some soldiers from the fort, to whom a satisfactory explanation of the situation had by this time been made.

Olga was being supported by her father. She was white from the loss of blood, though her wound had been hastily dressed and its bleeding stanched; and it was quite evident that she, too, was under the impression that Lynch law was about to be administered upon the chief companions of her guilty flight.

One of the soldiers had so entered into the spirit of the thing as to make a pretense of being the hangman of the occasion, while yet another had loosened one of the guy-ropes with which to haul upon the noose which his companion was making ready from the fall of the gibbet-like projecting beam high overhead.

"This one first!" cried the detective, rushing Gorgo forward under the noose. "He's only the other's infamous tool, but he shall have the first send-off."

Gorgo was on his knees again, chattering with fear, his yellowish, cadaverous skin having assumed the aspect of old parchment shriveled by fire.

"No, no; not first!" he screeched. "Markheim first! I beg, I beseech it! He is worse than I—in fact, I am not a bad sort altogether. Him first—Markheim first!"

Markheim, who had steadily avoided Olga's eyes, burst into a contemptuous laugh.

"Oh, don't hang me yet!" screamed the miserable Gorgo, the make-believe noose now dangling against his head. "I'll confess everything! Only don't, don't!"

"Will you confess all your crimes for a respite?" demanded Old Grip.

"I can't—impossible! they are too numerous! But specify, specify!"

A solemn and expectant hush had fallen upon the onlookers of this strange scene; and, by an expressive gesture, the detective called upon all to bear witness to what might be divulged.

"Who murdered Celeste Lesteur?"

"It was I—I! I acknowledge it," screamed the wretch. "But it was at Markheim's insistence, and he pinioned her arms."

Markheim burst into another mirthless laugh.

"The blasted coward speaks but the truth," he admitted. "The game's up; what's the odds now?"

"Mr. Shoresby's death by the cobra's bite?" was the next demand.

"That, too—that, too!" confessed the frantic Gorgo. "I slipped the cobra into the basket for the express purpose of having it sting the old gentleman. But that, too, at Markheim's instance! Oh, don't forget that!"

"True, again," growled Markheim. "And," pointing menacingly with his shackled hands at Mr. Reisbach, "that man was privy to the deed, after its commission—an accessory after the fact!"

Reisbach, flushing and paling, burst into confused denials, but his head sunk on his breast; and at least one of the secrets of Markheim's theretofore mysterious power over him was sufficiently explained.

"Away with the scoundrels!" cried the detective, triumphantly. "The impromptu gibbet-farce has served its turn, and the law must take its course."

CHAPTER L.

REWARDS.

BOTH Markheim and Gorgo broke into a howl of execration upon becoming aware of the *ruse* that had been practiced so successfully.

Indeed, it was with difficulty that they could be kept from flying at each other's throats.

"Do have a little more patience and philosophy, you chaps!" counseled Mr. Borepaw, with his cheery laugh. "Self-convicted beforehand, as you are, you'll both be hanged in due season; so what the deuce have you to complain of?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," cried Skipper Schofield, with a sudden burst of generosity. "It is probably a tedious tramp from this to the railroad, so I'll carry you all to the city on the Jibaway, even if I do lose a day by it."

This offer was promptly accepted, though, in view of the skipper having been secured in the Smyrna passage-money that was never to be earned, the self-sacrificing generosity of its motive was rather superficial than real.

While preparations for boarding the schooner were under way, there was an exclamation of anguish from Reisbach.

Olga, who had fainted a few moments before, had suddenly grown a dead, limp weight in his arms.

"She is dead!" cried the wretched parent. "But no; it cannot—it must not be!"

And his hand tremblingly groped for the flutterer of the heart, should it not have ceased to beat.

But mingled with the soldiers were now some officers from the fortifications, among whom was a surgeon, who, after a brief examination, pronounced the young woman dead—from the shock of the gunshot wound, superinduced by subsequent excitement, in his hasty professional opinion.

Such was the tragic end of the beautiful, but wayward and unprincipled Olga Reisbach; and it was perhaps better for all concerned, it being but seldom that such innate perverseness as had been manifested by her brief career is found to yield to reformatory treatment.

The frantic father, however, was savagely inconsolable, and had to be placed under restraint forthwith, or he would doubtless have rushed upon the shackled Markheim and pounded him to death with the first weapon at hand.

As it was, the tragedies of that eventful morning were not yet complete.

Half an hour after the Jibaway had started to tack back cityward, with her strange passengers on board—dead and living, manacled and free—Markheim and Gorgo, who had been placed under guard at separate extremities of the deck, suddenly and at the same instant evaded their guards, and rushed upon each other with irrepressible fury.

The detective, who was in the cabin at the moment, was almost instantly on deck, followed by others, but it was too late.

The criminals were already tearing at each other's throats with their manacled hands, in the waist of the vessel, and where the gangway through the bulwarks chanced to be open at the port side.

And just at that moment the schooner, in luffing, listed heavily to port.

As a consequence, and before intervention could come, overboard they both rolled, locked in a death grapple.

All was over in a moment, notwithstanding that a boat was lowered without delay.

Neither wretch could swim, by reason of his fetters, and both quickly sunk from sight, clutching at each other's necks, like the wild beasts of humanity that their murderous and absolutely unconscionable lives had proved them to be.

Our eventful story is about terminated; and but little remains to be said.

The greater part of the stolen money was recovered by its owner; though it was a long time ere the unhappy Reisbach couple shook off their bereavement. At latest accounts, however, they were once more in the show business somewhere in South America.

Old Grip was received from his final and successful enterprise by Luella like the conquering but unassuming hero that he was and is.

Luella hurriedly concluded her professional engagement, and was made the happy wife of Edward Gripon, the prince of detectives, one month later. They at once proceeded on their honeymoon tour in Europe, accompanied by the faithful Cheese-it and good Polly Grimwald.

Mr. Borepaw was at first inconsolable over Luella's professional farewell to the show busi-

ness. His receipts began to fall off so rapidly that he had to confess, after all, that a permanent animal-and-circus combination in New York was not a possible thing, without some such star attraction as Luella had so brilliantly afforded. He accordingly broke up at the Madison Square Garden. But at last accounts he was doing very profitably on the road, together with his new active partner, honest Silas Grimwald, to whom, in Polly's name, no less than his own, Luella had munificently turned over her partnership investment, on the joyous day of her departure abroad as the bride of the man of her heart.

A lovely child has since been born to them in Paris, and it is not likely that Luella will ever appear in public again.

As for the restless and redoubtable Old Grip, who shall say?

To such men the love of their exciting and useful profession becomes almost as a second nature.

He may, indeed, settle down, and henceforth be content with a life of easy enjoyment, blessed by the love and devotion of the bright and beautiful helpmeet of his heart. But it is more probable that we shall hear more of him in his favorite field again; that he may sooner or later yield to that fascination, which may be best expressed by paraphrasing the poet's language as follows:

"Field of adventurous service!
My heart still turns to thee;
As the lover to his mistress,
As the sailor to the sea."

THE END.

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